TOWARDS COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

★

ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZING, FEMINIST PRAXIS, AND MOVEMENT BUILDING STRATEGY

CHRIS CRASS

FOREWORD BY ROXANNE DUNBAR-ORTIZ

INTRODUCTION BY CHRIS DIXON

"These are words from the heart, overflowing onto the streets."
VIJAY PRASHAD

Praise for *Towards Collective Liberation*

"In *Towards Collective Liberation,* Chris Crass has shared with us a valuable collection of thoughtful, honest, and humble reflections on what it means to build the world that we are waiting for. Chris achieves the difficult task of practice driven-theory— encouraging and allowing all of us to be present in our work, to lead with our hearts, and to embody the change that we seek. It is through these critical and sometimes painfully honest reflections that we as organizers, activists, and social change makers are given the courage to do the same."

—Alicia Garza, People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER)

"For those of us committed to thinking across, though, and between organizing and theory, *Towards Collective Liberation* promises to map novel itineraries for an anti-racist project that demands that the theoretical be known through transformative organizing."

—Andrej Grubačić, anarchist organizer and author of *Don't Mourn, Balkanize! Essays After Yugoslavia* and *Wobblies and Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism, and Radical History*

"As a young Affrilachian woman engaged in the struggle, it is refreshing to hear analysis that is contemporary from another young person who is connecting the dots between practice and theory in the struggle to smash white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism. In *Towards Collective Liberation,* Chris's openness in talking about his own process and experiences is timely as we try to build movements that don't reproduce the systems that we're trying to overcome. I look forward to sharing it with my comrades in struggle."

—Ash-Lee Henderson, organizer with United Campus Workers and former steering committee member of Appalachia Rising

"With compelling honesty Chris Crass shares his journey toward understanding his own privilege in order to become a more effective ally in struggles for justice. *Towards Collective Liberation* provides inspiration and practical guidance for working across differences of race, class, sexuality, and gender. It is a thoughtful and engaging handbook for our times."

—Barbara Smith, author of *The Truth That Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender, and Freedom,* founding member of the Combahee River Collective, and editor of *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*

"Chris Crass offers a precious gift that new generations of young activists especially are starving for: a vision and strategy for social change rooted in love and soul. Unitarian Universalist youth movements in particular have found solace and hope in Crass's words and leadership. And for all those struggling with cultures of critique and competition woven through our movements, this book provides a healing approach to the pursuit of collective liberation. As a long-time organizer, Crass has learned to prioritize his own spirituality, and link it with his work against systemic injustice. The result: a compelling resource blending personal testimony, lessons from a diversity of organizations, and historical insights to ground and sustain our efforts."

—Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward, adjunct faculty, Starr King School for the Ministry and former national youth organizer, Unitarian Universalist Association

"This anthology of essays is of vital interest to those of us interested in bridging longstanding race, class, gender, and generational divides to build more effective social justice movements for the twenty-first century. In clear and compelling prose, socialist-anarchist Chris Crass offers a multilayered critique of the oppressive hierarchies of capitalism and the nation-state. Bringing both practical and theoretical insights from his own and others' experiences of the past two decades of tireless progressive movement building, Crass is at his best when he discusses his work as a white man to understand and uproot intertwining systems of racism and sexism. Powerfully attentive to the lessons of U.S. history from its margins, Chris Crass is part of a small but significant tradition of white radicals who have joined with people of color to shake the foundations of white supremacy—ranging from John Brown to Anne Braden to Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. In the odyssey described in these essays, he has become a major voice in the rise of new currents of white anti-racism in the twenty-first century."

—Catherine Fosl, author of *Subversive Southerner: Anne Braden and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Cold War South* and director of the Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research

"A deeply important, engaged, and learned defense of anarchism, class politics, and anti-racism. Grounded in study, organizing, and struggle, Towards Collective Liberation is a significant contribution to the recent history of the U.S. left."

—David Roediger, author of *The Wages of Whiteness* and *The Production of Difference* (with Elizabeth Esch)

"Chris Crass offers penetrating analysis and a keen understanding of the political and cultural dynamics shaping the United States. He is one of the new generation of anti-oppression/collective liberation advocates and organizers. What I like about his writings is they offer more than just his opinions, but a framework that is the result of both reflection upon inequities and his experiences putting his analysis into practice. We can all learn from reading this."

—Rev. David Billings, The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond and United Methodist Church Elder

"Chris Crass's writings are compost on the seeds of a better world struggling to grow, blossom and bear fruit. They are also gasoline on the flames of a crumbling, ugly, racist empire. He takes on the hard obstacles to movement and alliance building and—agree or not—pushes us all to take responsibility and be part of the solution. His book provides new tools—and sharpens a few old ones—that everyone who wants to make a better world and community needs in their toolbox."

—David Solnit, editor of *Globalize Liberation* and co-author of *Army of None: Strategies to Counter Military Recruiting, End War and Build a Better World* (with Aimee Allison)

"In his writing and organizing, Chris Crass has been at the forefront of building the grassroots, multiracial, feminist movements for justice we need. *Towards Collective Liberation* takes on questions of leadership, building democratic organizations, and movement strategy on a very personal level that invites us all to experiment and practice the way we live our values while struggling for systemic change. Chris Crass is writer/activist who keeps his eye on the prize: to work for collective liberation, remembering that mine is interdependent with yours. To that end, the book draws crucial lessons from applying women of color feminism to anti-racist organizing in white communities, and feminist work with men—lessons that need to be studied and applied widely."

—Elizabeth 'Betita' Martinez, founder of the Institute for Multiracial Justice and author of *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century*

"In his activism and writings, Chris Crass has been able to articulate and practice a transformative model for social change. Guided by a vision of collective liberation that centers the experience and leadership of women of color, Chris has done groundbreaking work to realize the revolutionary potential of grassroots multiracial alliances. His essays and interviews over the past two decades provide tremendously valuable and concrete lessons for all those deepening social, political, economic, and spiritual change."

—Harsha Walia, co-founder of No One Is Illegal and Radical Desis, and author of *Undoing Border Imperialism*

"In *Towards Collective Liberation* Chris Crass makes a subtle, but very important contribution to the movement for social justice that is critical for unity building in the 'Occupy' era. In *Towards Collective Liberation,* Chris shares his insight as a strategic bridge over the past twenty years between Anarchists, Marxists, Revolutionary Nationalists, and radical Feminist and Queer organizers and organic intellectuals. I firmly believe these insights will help those currently seeking to bridge ideological divides on the Left to build more insightful, transformative, and powerful social movements. Many of the theoretical and practical insights I have gained from working with Chris over the past ten years are on full display in this work. Insights that have helped me gain a deeper understanding of anarchism and radical queer theory that I have helped me struggle with my own limitations, biases and shortcomings. *Towards Collective Liberation* is a must-read."

—Kali Akuno, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement

"In over two decades of organizing, Chris Crass has ignited countless young people to engage in long-term feminist and racial justice organizing. From developing political education models grounded in people of color led organizing, to a political practice of mentorship and leadership development, his writing and activism provide a vision for those of us with various forms of privilege to bring our full selves to movement work with accountability, passion, and love. His visionary analysis and years of organizing, as well as interviews with some of the most ground-breaking anti-racist organizers of our generation are distilled into this book, which

will no doubt equip anyone who reads it with new inspiration, historical lessons, and practical organizing tools."

—Leah Jo Carnine, Arizona Hummingbird Collective and Communities United for Racial Justice

"This book was not written by an armchair activist. It came together on the bus on the way to a direct action, in a meeting room dialoguing with community organizers, and at the kitchen table while watching a friend's kid so she could attend a meeting. From the trenches of the social movement, Chris Crass offers insights that challenge and support us as we reach towards the goal of collective liberation. He brings his own experience as a white anti-racist activist to bear, inspiring others to join him in thinking critically about race, class, and gender so we can build a stronger and more successful movement."

—Maria Poblet, Causa Justa/Just Cause

"If you are a young activist, or if you have been organizing for social justice for decades, *Towards Collective Liberation* is a must-read. As a white, anti-racist organizer, Chris has worked for years building genuine and powerful solidarity and action between white and communities of color on critical social justice struggles of our day—from immigrant rights, to racial justice, to ending U.S. wars and occupations. As an organizer in South Asian, Muslim, and communities of color in a post 9/11 world, where wars abroad and at home are linked more than ever, I see this book as critical analytical grounding for U.S. activists to make another world possible and another U.S. necessary."

—Monami Maulik, founder and executive director of DRUM (Desis Rising Up & Moving) and contributor to Howard's Zinn's *Voices of a People's History*

"Chris Crass is a creative and dedicated organizer, and his writing comes out of that day-to-day, shoulder-to-shoulder work. I have seen the impact of his touch through the Anne Braden Program at Catalyst Project in a generation of thoughtful, accountable young white activists doing racial justice work from coast to coast. Thought-provoking and stimulating. Helpful and practical. New and seasoned activists should pick up this book."

—Pam McMichael, Highlander Research and Education Center

"Longtime social justice organizer, Chris Crass, provides honest and insightful personal and political analysis weaving a deep understanding of white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy into everything he writes. Accessible, inspiring and useful writing from the frontlines of struggle."

—Paul Kivel, educator, activist, and author of *Uprooting Racism* and *You Call This a Democracy?*

"Chris Crass brings that all too rare combo of finely honed strategic thinking, activist praxis, unflinching moral principle, and generous heart—qualities that show up on every page. This is the world I want to build. As a queer (white) Jewish feminist, I'm thrilled to have him as an ally."

—Penny Rosenwasser, founding board member, Jewish Voice for Peace, author of *Voices from a 'Promised Land': Palestinian & Israeli Peace Activists Speak Their Hearts* and *Visionary Voices, Women on Power: Conversations with Shamans, Activists, Teachers, Artists and Healers*

"Chris Crass is an important resource to movements for social justice. By educating, challenging, and training white activists and organizers to develop their own practices with an eye on collective liberation for all of us, he helps us build the movements we need. His work and example provide clear models for how this may be done."

—Rachel Herzing, Critical Resistance

"Chris Crass's politics and praxis transverse the boundaries of anti-racist organizing, anti-capitalism, gender struggles, and international solidarity. As with his organizing and, now, his writing, Chris has an incredible ability to ground things in historical context and make even the most complex ideas understandable and applicable. It's no wonder that the best white allies in the movement are 'graduates' of the Catalyst Project."

—Rami Elamine, *Left Turn*

"*Towards Collective Liberation* is an important contribution to the history of social movements. It a powerful, beautifully written account of twenty years of political organizing in the anarchist movement, by a young man whose entire life has been dedicated to the struggle for social justice. The book is a careful analysis of the origins, strategies and debates within movements like Food Not Bombs, the Rural Organizing Project, the Catalyst Project, showing that 'anarchist organizing' is not an oxymoron. Most impressive is Crass's commitment to confront the sexism and racism within the

movement and willingness to scrutinize his own life in this perspective. For anyone interested in learning about the soil from which the Global Justice and Occupy Movements have sprouted from, this is an essential read."

—Silvia Federici, author of *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body, and Primitive Accumulation*

"Part political biography, part political history and thoughtful analysis, this book is on-time in its laying out of personally tested strategies for eliminating racism, sexism, and capitalism. The juxtaposition of feminist, anarchist, and anti-racist thinking is a great jolt to the weary practices of progressive non-profits that skim the surface of change."

—Suzanne Pharr, author of *In the Time of the Right: Politics for Liberation* and *Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism*

"Chris Crass goes into the grassroots to produce a political vision that will catalyze political change. Drawing from the history of the anarchist tradition, Crass offers lessons and inspiration for a revitalized fully human left, alert to the distinctions between people and the social hierarchies that smother the full liberation of our humanity unmarked. These are words from the heart, overflowing onto the streets."

—Vijay Prashad, author of *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* and *Karma of Brown Folks*

"In a world screaming for solidarity across all cultures, Chris Crass offers actionable insight for those seeking accountable participation in building a better tomorrow. Crass's insights reveal a personal, transformational journey in the context of moving toward that tomorrow. His writing is frank, challenging and authentic. A must-read, in particular, for dominant culture activists seeking to live a justice-seeking life in accountable relationship with historically marginalized communities."

—Reverend Wendy von Zirpolo, founding member and past president of Unitarian Universalist Allies for Racial Equity, and chair of the Unitarian Universalist Journey Toward Wholeness Transformation Committee

"Grace Lee Boggs once told me that one's political orientation is often determined by the milieu in which one comes of age. For Chris Crass and others of our generation, it was our generation's refusal to accept the end of history, that capitalism was the only way. But, along the way, other structures

of domination pervaded our spaces, defined by race, class, gender identity, and sexuality. Many of us tried to reconcile with this contradiction, but none as successfully as Chris. His thoughtful essays in this collection wrestle with this and many other questions, a testament to the example Chris has set for the generation of committed white organizers that followed."

—Yvonne Yen Liu, Colorlines.com

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Anti-Racist Organizing, Feminist Praxis, and Movement Building Strategy

CHRIS CRASS

PM

Towards Collective Liberation: Anti-Racist Organizing, Feminist Praxis, and Movement Building Strategy
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ISBN: 978-1-60486-654-4
Library of Congress Control Number: 2012913638

Cover by John Yates
Layout by Jonathan Rowland

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

PM Press
PO Box 23912
Oakland, CA 94623
www.pmpress.org

Printed on recycled paper by the Employee Owners of Thomson-Shore in Dexter, Michigan.
www.thomsonshore.com

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To the memory and legacy of Joel Olson.

For my son River and his generation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For those who have come before us, who dared to dream of a better world and fought to realize it. For the victories they won and for the mistakes they made. For the political imagination they nurtured and for the lessons on organizing we have today because of their efforts. For my movement ancestors, whose vision, courage, and insights give us legacies to help us live and work for liberation.

To the organizations and projects which have been political homes and vehicles that I grew up in, learned from, practiced politics with, and built community through. Thank you to all the members and participants of the United Anarchist Front, Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation, Whittier and San Francisco Food Not Bombs, the Black Sheep Action Cluster, Challenging White Supremacy Workshops, Direct Action Network, Colours of Resistance, Catalyst Project, Heads Up Collective, the Strategic Resistance planning team, Ruckus Society, STARC (Students Transforming and Resisting Corporations) Alliance, YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists), Direct Action to Stop the War, the Organizational Development and Social Change study group, Against Patriarchy Men's Group, Movement Generation, Siafu, the Activist Study Circles, Showing Up for Racial Justice, and Knoxville United Against Racism. The experiences and lessons in *Towards Collective Liberation* are based on the work we have done together.

To my family who have loved, supported, and encouraged me throughout my life to be a writer and an activist. To my mom and dad, Linda and Fred Latham, for raising me to appreciate the beauty in this world and to value a life of engagement in community. To Ryan Latham, for being my sweet brother and with his wife Sarah for raising my beautiful nephews, Hunter and Caden, and nieces, Grace and Stacy. As a kid, one of the main reasons I used the name Chris Crass as my organizing and author name was to keep our family name out of the newspaper associated with radical

politics, but of course that didn't always work out. Thank you for allowing our home to become the headquarters of the Whittier anarchist movement and for always encouraging me to work towards my dreams.

To the loves of my life, Jardana Peacock and River Latham-Peacock, for making the last year of working on this book an absolute joy. To Jardana for believing in me and believing in the importance of this book, making it a family goal to support me in completing it. Thank you for building with me a family so full of love that we needed to bring River into the world to share it with us. Thank you for being my partner and putting our values into practice in our home, community, and movement with vision and compassion.

To my dear, sweet friends and comrades of Praxis House. While there were dozens of people who lived at Praxis over its fifteen years, I want to give special thanks to my housemates who became chosen family as we lived together for over a decade, grew into our thirties and forties together, and had transformative experiences with the birth of Natasha Janowski, who became the youngest member of Praxis for the next nine years. To Rahula Janowski, Jeff Larson, Clare Bayard, Catrina Roallos, Sasha Vodnik, and of course Natasha: thank you for sharing the intimate joys and hardships of life with me. Thank you for being part of an anarchist generation getting older together, with different responsibilities and sensibilities than our youth, maintaining our vision and values while allowing space for personal evolution and growth.

Thank you to my mentors who have taken time to help me grow and develop. Thank you for believing in me and teaching me. Thank you for helping me grow as an organizer and as a writer. Thank you for helping me understand myself as part of traditions of resistance and liberation struggle, and for encouraging me to step into my power and further the visions and values of those traditions. Thank you to Sharon Martinas, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Elizabeth 'Betita' Martínez, Paul Kivel, Max Elbaum, David Rojas, Keith McHenry, and Sue Homer. Thank you to my high school English teacher, Janet Wheeler, who introduced me to Thoreau, encouraged me to be a writer, and pulled me aside whenever the administration was planning some kind of retribution for our activism, sending me on my way with a wink to keep it up.

To my friends and comrades with whom I came into liberation politics in Whittier: Mike Rejniak, April Sullivan, Sam Smotherman, Nilou Mostoufi, Lisa Roberson, Tom Hyatt, Leslie Bevans, Jason Justice, Matt Richey, Terence Priester, Cathi Heinemeyer, Cory Noltensmeier, Corby Uzel, Enrique Gonzalez, Elmer Pinto, Mark Springer, Hsuan Pai, Starlee Kine, Franchezska Zamora, Jeff Davis, Matt Hart, Rachel Palisin, Michael Carpio, Michelle Kolzow, Brendan Reutebuch, Jason Oravec, Vanessa Williams, Tim Orona, Christena Quinn, Mike Haskal, Ryan Langley, Wendy Jung, Brad Waters, Tatiana Simonian, Teresa Garcia-Leys, Canoe Wagon Burner, Salina Nuñez, Aeyoung Kim, Jay Ross, and so many others. To our audacious and tender teenage selves who created a beloved community by giving all of ourselves to each other, and with so much earnestness set out to change the world. Much of my thinking about organizing starts with our experience in mind and with each of you in my heart.

To Chris Dixon and Molly McClure who made it a personal mission to help me turn the dream of this book into a reality. Chris has edited almost every essay and article I've written since we began our writing partnership, shortly after the Seattle WTO mass actions in 1999. His dedication to supporting movement writing from a wide range of people in our generation is deeply inspiring and he has consistently brought his talents and passion as an editor to greatly improve my writing. His counsel on numerous book related question has been essential. Years ago, Molly McClure, who was already one of my primary editors, decided it was time I had a personal writing coach and volunteered for the job. While working together at Catalyst, Molly consistently encouraged me to make space for the book and explained why it was politically important to do so, even offering to take work off my plate to help make time. After I transitioned out of Catalyst and became a stay-at-home dad, Molly continued encouraging me. My writing has greatly benefitted from Molly's visionary politics and organizing insights.

To the incredible team of friends and comrades who have edited my essays and interviews, you all have been absolutely vital to making this book a reality. In addition to Chris and Molly, my editing team includes: Rahula Janowski, Lydia Pelot-Hobbs, Nisha Anand, Sasha Vodnik, Cile Beatty, Danni Marilyn West, Amie Fishman, Sharon Martínas, Jeff Giaquinto, Clare Bayard, Z! Haukeness, Cindy Breunig, Jardana Peacock, Betty Jeanne

Rueters-Ward, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Elizabeth 'Betita' Martinez, Paul Kivel, Ingrid Chapman, Rachel Luft, Kerry Levenberg, Johnna Bossuot, Leah Jo Carnine, Berkley Carnine, Laura Close, Dan Berger, Josh Warren-White, Vivian Sanati, Dara Silverman, gabriel sayegh, Helen Luu, Pauline Hwang, Nrinder N.K. Nann, Marc Mascarenhas-Swan, Max Elbaum, Keith McHenry, James Tracy, Alice Nuccio, Laura McNeill, Azadeh Ghafari, J.C. Callender, Nilou Mostoufi, April Sullivan-Fitzhugh, Michelle O'Brien, Joe Tolbert, Tufara Waller Muhammad, Karly Safar, Jayanni Webster, Joshua Kahn Russell, Prof. Laura Head, Andrew Cornell, Harjit Singh Gill, Emily Thuma, Rami Elamine, Chanelle Gallant, Charlie Frederick, Amar Shah, Alicia Garza, Elandria Williams, Carla Wallace, Ernesto Aguilar, and Lisa Albrecht.

To my comrades at Catalyst Project who took this book project on and gave me tremendous support, encouragement, and love. Thank you to Josh Warren-White for first suggesting that I write a book and for bringing a proposal to Catalyst about why the group should make the writing of this book a program area. Several times during my years at Catalyst, the organization financially and politically supported me to devote time to the book. This was an incredible blessing. In addition to Josh, Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward, Ari Clemenzi, Becca Tumposky, Alia Trindle, Ingrid Chapman, Clare Bayard, Amie Fishman, and Molly McClure provided love and encouragement. Catalyst was my political home for many years and I am so grateful for all the ways we threw down together to build movement.

Thank you to my comrades at PM Press for believing in me, and this book. Thank you to Ramsey Kanaan and Craig O'Hara for approaching me to publish with PM Press and for giving me so many reasons why I am so thankful I did. Thank you to my PM editor, Romy Ruukel, for committing to the book and for doing so much to improve it. Thank you to John Yates for designing the cover, Stephanie Pasvankias for your work on the PM website, Jonathan Rowland for the interior book design, and Gregory Nipper for expert copyediting. Thanks to the whole PM Press team for all you do to nourish the radical political imagination. Thanks also to my friends at Remedy Coffee in Knoxville for your support as I worked on the book over the past year.

Towards Collective Liberation is dedicated to the memory and legacy of Joel Olson who had been a leading thinker and activist on the Left

advancing a movement-based anarchist analysis and strategy that influenced thousands of us over the past two decades. His writing in *Profane Existence,* the *Blast, Love and Rage, Race Traitor,* and Bring the Ruckus was always on the cutting edge of where the movement needed to go. He was a beautiful father, a loved professor, and an inspiring agitator. He died far too young, and while he would argue with many points in this book to help me develop my politics, he has nonetheless had a profound influence on me.

The book is also dedicated to my son, River, and his generation. To my tenderhearted, magical little boy: let us make lasting changes in this society so that you and your generation grow up with more role models, options, and resources to live anti-racist, feminist, socialist, liberation values in every facet of life and have them reflected back to you in more and more political, economic, social, and cultural institutions of society. I love you with all my heart, and being your dad, just as Joel told me it would be, is the greatest thing I've ever done. For the future, let us honor those who have gone before us.

Joel Olson (1967–2012), with love and rage.

FOREWORD

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

I met Chris Crass in 1998 after I had published a memoir, *Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie*. He worked in the video store a block from where my daughter, Michelle, and I lived at the time. Checking out a video on my account, Michelle met Chris, who introduced himself as a fan of my book. The first thing I noticed about Chris when I went to meet him was the red and black IWW button prominently displayed on his hoodie. Instant fellow workers! He knew from reading my book about my grandfather Dunbar being a card-carrying Wobbly in Oklahoma from the moment of its creation in 1905, and how he had named my father, born in 1907, after the Wobbly leaders on trial in Boise—Moyer Haywood Pettibone Scarberry Dunbar. My father's name was a walking radical history lesson and inspiration during my impoverished childhood in rural Oklahoma of the 1940s and 1950s. Chris made me realize how relevant the book might be to young activists such as him. Thus began our weekly coffee dates at my kitchen table. I was already working on a second memoir about my journey to radical activism and feminism, called *Outlaw Woman,* which Chris graciously read in drafts and gave me feedback.

Chris generously names me as one of his mentors, but I have learned as much, if not more, from him. When I met him, I was rather traumatized and depressed following my years in war-torn Nicaragua, trying with many others to stop Reagan's cruel contra war that ended with electoral defeat of the war-weary Sandinistas. With invasions of Panama and Iraq, open imperialist militarism had returned to the United States in the early 1990s and I had largely withdrawn from activism to write. I needed to think about what had gone wrong with our seemingly powerful movements and reassess what could be done to crush capitalism and imperialism.

Chris introduced me to a whole new movement of young people who thrilled and inspired me, and also pulled me out of my self-isolation and

depression. I had read about Food Not Bombs activists being arrested in San Francisco for trying to feed the poor and homeless, but Chris took me to the large Friday night gatherings of those young activists. I had one thing going for me in addition to my Wobbly lineage as usually the only older person in the crowd—I was, and am, a vegan.

Chris told me about Love and Rage, then active in many parts of the country, and about the many different groups in which young activists worked. He played for me the music of this radical demographic and told me about and showed me its public art and performances.

This was the boom time of the electronics industry in the Bay Area, a time of intense gentrification and a movement to halt it. One chilly night, I found myself with about a hundred protesters occupying a space in the Mission District, a primarily Latino/a, working-class neighborhood. The building had recently been purchased by a developer, who was going to turn it into live/work lofts. Announcing his intention, the owner painted over a longtime community mural on one of its walls. We were a "flash mob" of sorts before that term was invented, and the protest melted into disappearance as sirens came closer. I remember a young woman who called herself Bonfire Madigan, playing the cello, not the most obvious instrument to hear at a street demonstration and not the easiest to flee with, but she did with no problem.

This was a joyful, growing youth movement. But Chris and others were not only about fun and games and spontaneity. They managed well-planned political actions similar to those of my own radical youth in the 1960s, especially akin to the dead serious discussions combined with joyful antics of the early women's liberation movement. There were also notable differences. In the '60s, there was always an edge of meanness in our relations with one another that could explode into destructive divisions under the guise of political differences, but more likely from ego-driven insecurities. The young activists I met through Chris related to one another at a higher, more principled and respectful level. Being with them helped me to curb my own '60s-style behavior, although never completely. Now, there's a whole new generation even more skilled in social relations who, along with Chris's peer group, have been able to do the seemingly impossible in creating the Occupy Wall Street movement and introducing millions of people to the concept of democratic decision-making and collective

leadership. Yes, there remain all the fissures and problems of the settler society, particularly the inherent racism, sexism, and homophobia. But they are being discussed and dealt with at a higher level than I ever imagined possible in the 1960s.

Most remarkably, Chris was intent on fostering intergenerational movement building. Chris grew up in Richard Nixon's hometown of Whittier, in Los Angeles County near the border of Orange County. He began practicing radical politics in high school in the suburbs of Los Angeles in the late 1980s. He then took courses in junior college that allowed him to learn about past social movements with some teachers who had themselves been activists. Chris was challenged by young women activists for male privilege and by African Americans and Latino/as for white privilege. He moved north to finish his degree at San Francisco State University. When I met him, I was astonished, as a veteran feminist, to learn that his major was Race, Class, Gender, and Power Studies with cross-disciplinary studies in the departments of Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, Political Science, Labor History, and LGBT Studies. He was clearly studying to be a lifetime social justice organizer, not an academic, and centering his radical politics on understanding race, class, and gender.

I was so excited about the simmering movement that Chris brought me into, I wanted to share it with my '60s comrades in the San Francisco Bay Area. Above all, I wanted Chris to meet my mentor and beloved friend, Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez, whom close friends and family simply called 'Betita' (as Chris soon did). I knew it might be difficult to persuade Betita to meet with and take seriously a young, white man, as she was up to her neck in working with young Latinas and Latinos in the San Francisco Mission District, where she lived, and traveling constantly to speak at rallies and other events organized by Latino/as around the country. But they did meet and hit it off and Betita quickly became a mentor to Chris and his cohorts.

Betita and I met in 1969, soon after she moved from New York to northern New Mexico to work with the militant Hispano land movement there, publishing the newspaper *El Grito del Norte*. Betita was already a legend in the '60s movement as the New York secretary of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the most important social movement in the United States in the early to mid-'60s. Although she was only thirteen years older than I was, her organizing experience and

knowledge were vast. From the moment I met her, I knew she would be an important mentor to me as she was to hundreds of others, including Chris. Before she became a staff person for SNCC (one of only two Latinas to do so), Betita had pursued successful careers first on the United Nations staff in Geneva and New York, then as a book editor in a prestigious New York publishing house. Going to SNCC was not a continuation of a career path for her, but a huge change to fulltime, lifetime organizing, living on peanut butter sandwiches, and being a single mom on top of the poorly paid—if paid at all—work required in doing social justice work. Betita was a writer as well as an editor, and published several classic books.

Chris graduated from San Francisco State in mid-1999, and was still working at the video store in the fall while organizing for demonstrations against the neoliberal agenda of the World Trade Organization to take place at the end of November in Seattle. Much of the inspiration for the movements in the North America and Europe to coalesce around opposing ruthless globalization came from the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas on New Year's Day, 1994. I knew it would be a great boost to the flowering International Indigenous Movement that I had helped organize since 1970s and 1980s, but I could not have predicted the influence of the Zapatista Mayan style of organizing and understanding of neoliberalism on all social movements in the United States and Europe. This was the first salvo in the struggle against globalization that sought to throw farmers in the poor countries off their plots of land, make them into desperate migrant workers, and then begin eroding the fragile economic security of the poor and middles classes in the industrialized countries as well.

I had assumed that Chris would be going to Seattle, but as he sat in my apartment after work a few days before the convergence, he said he wasn't going. Because so many Food Not Bombs members were going, a few decided to stay behind to keep things going. Besides, he said, he needed to work and couldn't afford the trip. I offered to buy him a ticket, but it took more than that; I had to persuade him that he needed to be there. I said that for people like him who had been doing grassroots organizing for years, it was very important to participate in mass movement moments, not only to be part of the experience, which was also important, but to help get a bigger picture assessment of where the movement is at, its strengths and weaknesses, to asses what opportunities and challenges might be indicated.

Chris had shared with me that he often felt he and his comrades were beating their heads against the wall, and I said that the Seattle convergence could be a moment to step out of the routine, to witness the powerful movement that he and his generation had built, and return with fresh thinking for moving forward.

Following the amazing success in closing down the WTO meeting in Seattle, Betita wrote an extremely controversial and influential essay, "Where Was the Color in Seattle?" In it, she noted and criticized the fact that the demonstrators and organizers were predominantly white and that the impacts of global capitalism on communities of color in the United States were deemed peripheral. Betita herself was present at the shut-down, participating with a program organized by the Seattle-based El Centro de la Raza. While there were organizations of color in Seattle, especially Indigenous groups from around the world, and tens of thousands of working-class union members of different generations, the direct action organizing that shut down the WTO and received the most media attention was composed primarily of young white activists without an anti-racist analysis.

The essay had a large impact on Chris, who took up the challenge to change the status quo of the movement he had been instrumental in building during the 1990s. He worked closely with Betita and another important mentor in his life, Sharon Martinas of the Challenging White Supremacy (CWS) Workshops. Sharon also lived in the neighborhood and met Chris at the video store where he worked. Sharon was a leader of the renowned "Third World Strike" at San Francisco State University in 1968–1969, which culminated in the establishment of the School of Ethnic Studies, the precursor to Ethnic and Women's Studies programs in hundreds of institutions of higher education. Before that, Sharon worked in Freedom Schools during the civil rights movement, and in the 1980s with CISPES, the U.S.-based solidarity movement with the people of El Salvador. In 1993, she co-founded the CWS workshops.

Chris and his young comrades formed and developed Catalyst Project, devoted to anti-racist organizing and training. Betita, Sharon, and I are among the advisers to Catalyst, an example of the intergenerational organizing in which Chris excels.

Chris's search for mentors and role models did not stop with only us three women present in his life; he also researched and wrote about anarchist women leaders from the past, such as the African American anarchist Lucy Parsons. He also embraced the life and work of Anne Braden, who was my first mentor when I was becoming politically active in the 1960s. Anne and her husband, Carl, were Southern anti-racist whites involved in every struggle in the South from the 1940s onward. Anne died in 2006, active to the very end. When Catalyst decided to start an anti-racist training program, they named it the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Organizing Training Program.

Now, Chris has produced a book of essays that tells of his journey from Orange County middle-class childhood to collective liberation struggle. Along with interview case studies of anti-racist organizing, this is both a work of political art and a valuable handbook.

Clearly, he has grown into his own mentorship role.

FROM COLLECTIVE REFUSAL TO COLLECTIVE LIBERATION:

An Introduction

Chris Dixon

Transformative social movements are always much more dynamic and intelligent than individual organizers, no matter how reflective, tireless, and courageous such individuals may be. This is one of many amazing things about collective struggles for justice. At the same time, there are always individuals who crystallize movement experiences, who distill and share hard-won insights and help to catalyze much-needed discussions. Chris Crass is one of these people. For two decades, he has consistently given expression to the ideas, questions, and lessons of a generational cohort of radical organizers and activists in the United States.

Towards Collective Liberation collects and refines some of the most generative of these insights. Drawing on a wealth of experiences—his own and those of other conscious organizers—Crass grapples with the big question that all of us committed to social transformation face: How can we overcome the interconnected systems of oppression and exploitation that structure our society? How can we struggle towards collective liberation? In response, he highlights a relevant radical politics that people are already building as they struggle for justice and dignity. As Crass describes in his opening essay, this is a politics based in grassroots organizing, participatory democracy, coalitional work across differences, creative direct action, organization building, strategy rooted in vision for a better world, and unapologetic love. At the core of this politics is a profound commitment to building anti-racist, multiracial, feminist, and queer liberationist movements against capitalism.

This book, in a certain sense, follows Crass's life for the last twenty-three years—from his early days as an activist with Love and Rage in the suburbs

of Southern California and a core organizer in San Francisco Food Not Bombs to his more recent work as a leading anti-racist organizer and educator. Crass, like many of us deeply influenced by feminism, takes seriously that "the personal" and "the political" cannot be strictly separated: genuinely transformative politics have to be rooted in—but never restricted to—our life experiences. As his writing demonstrates, even relatively privileged people can delve into their lives to learn about how power works in our society, as well as possibilities and challenges for visionary organizing. *Towards Collective Liberation* reflects this commitment, developing political analysis through storytelling and critical reflection. This is a hallmark of Crass's writing.

What is most important about this book is not the story it tells about Chris Crass, but rather the lessons it shares for all of our social justice efforts today. The concerns that Crass has consistently taken up in his organizing and writing—movement building, challenging white supremacy, strategic planning, and learning from previous movement experiences—continue to be some of most pressing for activists and organizers, especially as new movements are emerging in this time of crisis. While Crass's reflections are rooted in specific experiences, they are relevant for people struggling around a wide range of issues and in a variety of circumstances across the United States.

These lessons and reflections have grown out of a history that is not widely known. This is the history of a political generation that grew up in a time of right-wing counterrevolution symbolized by Ronald Reagan, and was radicalized with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the first Gulf War, and the Rodney King verdict. As leading ideologues celebrated the collapse of the Soviet Union and proclaimed "the end of history," this political generation significantly gravitated towards anarchist politics and activism. Over the course of the 1990s, many in this generation increasingly focused on building broad radical movements and turned especially to the ideas and practices of anti-racist feminism. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, these activists played leading roles in the global justice movement and were part of a crucial movement-wide learning process about power, privilege, solidarity, and organizing. Over the last decade, they have taken lessons from this experience into a range of campaigns, organizations, and movements. Through these efforts, they are helping to develop a new radical

political synthesis that moves past some debilitating ideological conflicts and pulls together useful ideas and practices from a range of Left traditions.

Crass, through his organizing, writing, and political education work, has been a key figure in this history. Indeed, we cannot fully appreciate him and his efforts without understanding the movement trajectory that has shaped him and he has helped to shape. So, as a movement historian and someone who has also been deeply involved in this trajectory, let me briefly lay out the story here, following 1990s anarchism into anti-racist feminism, the global justice movement, and today's organizing towards collective liberation. While some readers will be familiar with this history and politics, many may find it altogether new. My main hope is to help explain the significance of the writings in this collection and ground their vital political insights. I also humbly hope for what I offer to illuminate one strand of movement history in the last two decades and, more importantly, contribute to building the liberatory movements that we need.

Anarchism

As Crass explains in the essay "A New World in Our Hearts," anarchism has its origins in the working-class socialist movements of the late nineteenth century. This was a politics based on opposition to capitalism and the state as fundamental forms of domination, along with a commitment to self-management, solidarity, and social equality.[1] While rooted in this tradition, the anarchism taken up and developed by activists in the 1990s was also a product of movement experiences of the preceding four decades. The Black freedom movement, the women's liberation movement, and other liberation movements of the 1960s deeply influenced forms of radical politics that involved embodying liberatory values in organizing, creating alternatives to top-down organizations, and challenging multiple forms of oppression.[2]

Starting in the 1970s, a chain of movement experiences melded many of these political forms together with anarchism. Three of the most important links in this chain were the nonviolent direct action movement (sometimes known as the "anti-nuke movement"), the direct action AIDS activism associated with the radical queer group ACT UP, and the environmental defense mobilizations of Earth First! These movement experiences fused

together a set of activist practices that included militant and often large-scale civil disobedience actions; decentralized coordination through small groups called "affinity groups"; use of consensus decision-making process (originally called "feminist process"); and a focus on developing new ways of relating through things such as housing collectives and anti-racism trainings.[3]

By the 1990s, anarchism in the United States was synonymous with this set of practices, the general aspirations of the historic anarchist tradition, and a far-reaching critique of domination. It was characterized by a shared counterculture and template of activities, connecting mostly young people through a series of predominantly white and middle-class subcultural scenes, often rooted in punk rock, across the country. These activists participated in a wide range of campaigns, engaged in confrontational direct actions, supported political prisoners such as Mumia Abu-Jamal, worked to inject art and imagination into activism, organized anarchist convergences across North America, and developed a network of anarchist bookstores and political spaces.[4]

One of the most widespread and active initiatives linking these scenes was the Food Not Bombs (FNB) network. In the early 1990s, dozens of FNB chapters throughout the United States regularly served free food in public spaces, visibly challenging a social order that produces poverty and violence.[5] San Francisco FNB was a central node in the network, as it maintained the contact list for the network, sent out "how to start an FNB group" guides, published an international newsletter, and impressively organized against a vicious campaign by the city government to shut down its servings. Crass was deeply involved in all of this and, by the mid-1990s, was well known as a leading FNB organizer on the West Coast. In 1995, he wrote "Towards a Non-Violent Society: A Position Paper on Anarchism, Social Change, and Food Not Bombs" in consultation with others in San Francisco FNB; this paper was widely circulated and discussed throughout the FNB network in the United States, Canada, and Europe.

As Crass points out, FNB (then as now) functioned as a form of gateway activism for tens of thousands of mostly young people. Through FNB, countless activists have learned about economic inequality and the role of the state in preserving it, and have experienced their own power to take

direct action and create alternative institutions. FNB groups have also struggled practically around questions related to community organizing, leadership, strategy, organizational structure, and power relations. In the essay "Food Not Bombs and the Building of a Grassroots Anarchist Left," Crass offers an in-depth history of San Francisco FNB in the 1990s and shares the rich lessons that developed out of it.

Crass and many of his comrades in San Francisco FNB were part of a growing anarchist tendency that sought to break out of the anarchist subcultural milieu and build broader movements. Anarchist publications such as the *Blast* in Minneapolis, for example, intentionally tried to move beyond punk scenes and connect with community-based struggles. The Love and Rage anarchist network, which started in 1989 and solidified into a formal membership organization in 1993, began to identify strategic priorities and areas of common political work, wrestled with key political questions around race and racism, and attempted to construct a continental revolutionary anarchist federation. Anarchists also organized two groundbreaking "Active Resistance" conferences—in Chicago in 1996 and in Toronto in 1998—that explicitly centered themes such as community organizing and movement building.[6]

All of these efforts, in different but overlapping ways, tried to push anarchism into a more intentional orientation towards struggles rooted in working-class communities and communities of color. While uneven, these efforts were still significant. They contributed to developing (or returning to) a kind of movement-based anarchism that was less about sustaining a subculture and more about furthering popular struggles for justice and dignity. They also helped to produce anarchist politics that had wider relevance outside of white middle-class activist scenes.

Anti-Racist Feminism

Many 1990s activists saw the persistence of dynamics of privilege and oppression in organizing work as a major barrier to building a vibrant movement-based anarchism. With women, people of color, queer, and working-class activists in the lead, they increasingly identified ways in which the social hierarchies that structure our society were being reproduced in

movement spaces, sustaining longstanding exclusions, and severely hindering overall efforts for radical change. Searching for ways forward, some activists began working to build stronger analysis and practice around feminism, anti-racism, and queer liberation. They turned especially to the ideas and experiences of anti-racist feminism.

Rooted in the liberation movements of the 1960s, anti-racist feminism is a political strand that bloomed in the 1970s and 1980s. It started with the efforts of radical women of color, many of them lesbians, to challenge the limitations of existing movements in being able to account for their complex experiences of oppression based on race, class, gender, and sexuality. Coming together in groups, conferences, and publishing collectives, these activists began creating shared politics grounded in their lives and struggles.[7] The Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist group in Boston, summed up these emerging politics in a historic 1977 statement in which they called for developing an "integrated analysis" of oppression.[8] This analysis suggests that systems of racism, capitalism, hetero-patriarchy, and ableism operate with and through each other—they are interconnected. Truly revolutionary politics, in short, necessarily involves fighting against multiple forms of oppression.[9]

Anarchist-influenced activists in the 1990s increasingly took up this "integrated analysis," often called "intersectionality" in academic contexts.[10] Indeed, those who went to college benefited from a previous generation's struggles to win Third World Studies, Women's Studies, Labor Studies, and Gay and Lesbian Studies. These efforts created the institutional space for feminist and anti-racist scholars to bring intersectional ideas into classrooms. As a result, student activists and others were reading work by radical feminists of color, such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Angela Davis, bell hooks, June Jordan, Joanna Kadi, and Barbara Smith. This work resonated with and deepened the critique of domination that was so central for anarchists, even as it raised difficult questions for the predominantly white and frequently male-dominated anarchist movement.

In grappling with these questions, activists began to investigate their own social locations within a nexus of privilege and oppression. They also started crafting tools for more equitable, inclusive, and participatory organizing. While women and genderqueer organizers tended to be at the

forefront of this, some white men also worked to develop anti-racist feminist practice among anarchist-leaning activists. Crass became one of the most prominent activists in this 1990s tendency through his organizing work in FNB and as his writing began to circulate into wider activist networks.

The second section of this book, "We Make the Road by Walking," includes some of Crass's most important contributions to this movement-wide effort as he frankly discusses his own experiences of coming into feminist and anti-racist consciousness, frequently through challenges by activists with direct experiences of oppression, and makes concrete suggestions for organizing. "Against Patriarchy: Tools for Men to Help Further Feminist Revolution," for example, boils down many of these suggestions into a thought-provoking primer. A central theme in these writings, as in all of Crass's work, is that systems of oppression consistently sabotage social change efforts—they limit analysis, undercut alliance building, corrode organizations, and constrain strategy. Developing anti-racist feminist practice in our collective political work is thus essential for building resilient and visionary movements.

The Global Justice Movement

While U.S. anarchists were getting more serious and organized, a revolt against neoliberalism was brewing, starting in the global South. Building on legacies of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, this revolt started in the 1980s with widespread popular mobilizations against austerity measures mandated by the International Monetary Fund. By the early 1990s, meetings of neoliberal institutions such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO) faced massive protests from Bangalore to Berlin.[11] And then, on January 1, 1994, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation stepped onto the world stage by seizing seven cities in Chiapas, Mexico. "Ya *Basta!*" they said in opposition to the Mexican government and neoliberalism. Bringing together aspects of Marxism, anarchism, and Mayan traditions, the Zapatistas offered an autonomous politics based on listening and dialogue, building democratic power from below, and creating self-governing communities.[12]

The Zapatistas also facilitated important transnational connections among movements. In the late 1990s, they sponsored two face-to-face global *Encuentros* that served as key meeting points for what was becoming the global justice movement. The second of these led to the formation of the Peoples' Global Action (PGA) network, which brought together massive movements in the global South along with generally smaller organizations and collectives in the North to develop horizontal links in the struggle against neoliberalism. As the new millennium approached, anarchism in the North and autonomous movements in the South were thus increasingly connected.

U.S. anarchists were both deeply inspired by the Zapatistas and among the earliest Zapatista supporters, translating their declarations into English, sending material aid, and demonstrating against their repression by the Mexican government. U.S. anarchists were also some of the first to work with the PGA. Following the example of their European counterparts, many began organizing around the PGA's calls for "global days of action" involving coordinated international protests against institutions leading and legitimating neoliberalism. Though there had been previous summit protests in North America, the week of successful demonstrations and direct actions against the 1999 WTO ministerial in Seattle garnered significant and widespread attention.

Involving more than fifty thousand people, the Seattle protests came out of groundbreaking—but often uneasy—coalitions among popular organizations in the global South, and labor unions, environmental groups, and others in the global North. Anarchists played leading roles in planning and coordinating the mass blockades and street battles there, using direct action, consensus decision-making, and affinity groups. Crass was among them. In the wake of the successful disruption of the Seattle ministerial, the global justice movement carried the coalitions and momentum into other demonstrations against major meetings of the wealthy and powerful. The next few years saw showdowns between protestors and police from Washington, DC, to Los Angeles, from Quebec City to Miami, and U.S. activists traveled to mobilizations at summits around the world.[13]

Through the global justice movement, tens of thousands of people participated in anarchist-influenced approaches and politics. At the same

time, this cycle of struggle provided opportunities for activists to wrestle with their own limitations in the context of a growing movement. Longtime activist and writer Elizabeth 'Betita' Martínez raised some of these in her widely circulated 2000 essay "Where Was the Color in Seattle?"[14] This critical intervention and subsequent ones kicked off discussions about race in the movement and, more generally, the key role of white supremacy in undermining U.S. movements. These interventions also opened up space for conversations about a range of related issues, including movement strategy, community organizing, transnational solidarity, alliance building, and social hierarchies based on gender, class, sexuality, and age. Building on work in the 1990s, anti-racist feminism was a touchstone for many of these challenging and productive discussions.[15]

Crass was uniquely situated to contribute to these efforts. While organizing in the global justice movement, he had also developed relationships with 1960s and '70s liberation movement elders such as Martínez, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, and Sharon Martinas. As Crass describes in "'By All Means, Keep Moving': Towards Anti-Racist Politics and Practice," when the Seattle protests happened, he was participating in an anti-racism study group organized by Martinas, who ran the Challenging White Supremacy Workshop (CWS) series in San Francisco. He was also meeting regularly with Dunbar-Ortiz and Martínez to discuss lessons from past movements and strategy for current organizing. With the encouragement and support of Dunbar-Ortiz, Martinas, and Martínez, Crass and others developed a new CWS training program called "Anti-Racism for Global Justice," which worked with a younger generation of white activists in the global justice movement. This program, which eventually became the well-known Catalyst Project, offered anti-racism training to activists across the United States.

Crass also worked with radical women of color organizers Pauline Hwang and Helen Luu to launch Colours of Resistance (COR), a network that sought to develop feminist, multiracial, anti-racist, anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist politics in the global justice movement. Active from 2000 to 2006, this network built relationships among dozens of activists and organizers across North America who were grappling with similar questions around what was increasingly called "anti-oppression politics" as well as

grassroots organizing and broader movement building. COR also developed lively e-mail lists and an influential online clearinghouse of articles and resources related to these and other pressing questions for the movement.

As in all times of upsurge, this was a period of rich reflection and exchange. In a movement on the move, many activists began writing and the Internet made it easier than ever before to share ideas. Building on some of his earlier work, Crass leapt into this explosion of movement writing, encouraging others to write, interviewing leading organizers, and writing many articles himself. Beginning with his 2000 essay "Beyond the Whiteness —Global Capitalism and White Supremacy," Crass consistently emphasized opportunities for the mostly white sections of the global justice movement to work in solidarity with community-based struggles for racial justice. With subsequent work, he delved into a range of issues connected to white anti-racist organizing, always prioritizing the perspectives of people of color, women, queers, and working-class people. During this prolific period, Crass's writings were featured regularly in publications such as *Clamor, HeartattaCk,* and *Onward,* and on websites such as COR, Infoshop.org, and ZNet. Judging from the circulation and popularity of his work around the country and internationally, it clearly struck a resonant chord.[16]

Section Three of this book, "Because Good Ideas Are Not Enough," brings together two of Crass's landmark articles from this time. Each digs into topics that are particularly difficult for anarchist-influenced activists to talk about because they challenge prevailing ideas about how social change happens. In "Looking to the Light of Freedom," Crass draws on the experience of the civil rights movement to advocate for a political approach based on organizing—bringing people together to reflect on their lived experiences, develop political analysis, take action, and build collective power. He also introduces the issue of leadership in activist groups, a topic that he more fully engages in "But We Don't Have Leaders." In that piece, Crass returns to his experiences in FNB to examine how leadership manifests even when activists don't acknowledge it, and to look at anti-authoritarian ways of developing leadership.

Organizing Towards Collective Liberation

By the early 2000s, the global justice movement was waning in the United States due to both its inability to fully resolve the challenging questions it faced and the profound shift in political climate after the events of September 11, 2001. Influenced by the post-Seattle discussions, thousands of activists who had participated in the movement also consciously moved their energy into more long-term local organizing efforts, which contributed to the decline of the more visible mass mobilizations. However, the global justice movement has had a lasting impact. In providing a space to grapple with key issues, the movement enabled many activists to develop more complex forms of analysis and practice. These combined anarchist and anti-racist feminist politics with an orientation towards organizing to build popular power and broad-based movements. Activists have taken these increasingly sophisticated politics with them into the anti-war, environmental, immigrant rights, labor, prison abolition, and queer liberation movements, among others.

Catalyst Project, with Crass as a core staff member until 2011, has played a key role in circulating and deepening these politics over the last decade. Focusing on the mostly white sectors of Left movements, Catalyst has influenced tens of thousands of activists through onetime workshops, dedicated organizing support, leadership development, and intensive organizer training programs. They have developed close relationships with base building organizations rooted in working-class communities of color, and they have been deeply involved in national-level organizing related to grassroots reconstruction efforts in the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina, anti-militarism and GI resistance, and immigrant-rights struggles in Arizona and Alabama. As a testament to its influence, Catalyst has popularized the formulation"collective liberation" as an affirmative way to talk about fighting interconnected power relations, emphasizing that everyone has a stake in transforming systems of oppression.

In doing this work, Catalyst has tapped into a distinguished history. Indeed, along with dozens of other organizations across the United States, they have revitalized a longstanding tradition of anti-racist organizing in white communities as part of building liberatory multiracial movements. This tradition has its origins in the radical wing of the nineteenth century abolitionist movement, which included white activists such as John Brown, William Lloyd Garrison, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, and Abby Kelley, who

fought not only against slavery but also for racial equality. This tradition continued during the first part of the twentieth century in the labor movement, as white anarchists and socialists in the Industrial Workers of the World and later the Congress of Industrial Organizations helped to create the first unions open to workers of all races and genders. In the 1950s and 1960s, another wave of white organizers—such as Anne and Carl Braden, Myles and Zilphia Horton, and Howard Zinn—followed in this tradition as they helped build the civil rights movement in the South against Jim Crow.

By the late 1960s and into the 1970s, many white radicals in the anti-war movement took up this tradition as they struggled against racism at home and U.S. imperialism abroad in Students for a Democratic Society and then the Weather Underground, Prairie Fire, and the New Communist Movement. At the same time, following a somewhat different strand of this tradition, other white radicals turned towards anti-capitalist and anti-racist community organizing in poor and working-class white communities, forming organizations such as the Young Patriots, Rising Up Angry, and White Lightning. In the 1970s and 1980s, a cohort of white lesbian feminists —including Suzanne Pharr, Adrienne Rich, Mab Segrest, and Laura Whitehorn—redefined this tradition as they worked alongside radical women of color in developing a rigorously anti-racist feminist politics and practice. During the 1990s, a further wave of white anarchists and socialists turned to this tradition through anti-racist organizing in Anarchist Black Cross, Anti-Racist Action, the Challenging White Supremacy Workshop, and Love and Rage.[17]

Building on this historical tradition, Section Four of this book, "Love in Our Hearts and Eyes on the Prize," explores the work of Catalyst along with four other leading anti-racist organizations in the 2000s. All have focused on grassroots organizing in white communities as strategically necessary work for challenging racism and laying the basis for transformative movements. Just as so many previous anti-racist efforts were deeply influenced by Left leadership and organizing in communities of color, so too is this white anti-racist organizing today.

Catalyst has worked to foster a culture of white anti-racist organizing that values reflection, strategy, vision and compassion. In "What We Mean

by White Anti-Racist Organizing," Crass usefully defines the strategy behind this organizing work. The final piece in this section is an interview with the Catalyst collective, laying out the unique approach it has crafted around political education, leadership development, Left strategy, and building multiracial movements.

Alongside his work with Catalyst, Crass also helped to form the Heads Up Collective. Launched in direct response to the post-September 11 "war on terror," Heads Up was an all-volunteer white, anti-racist, anti-imperialist group in the San Francisco Bay Area that existed from 2001 to 2008. Heads Up initially formed to bring political lessons and energy from the global justice movement into the nascent anti-war movement, where it played an important role during the mass direct action in San Francisco against the 2003 U.S. ground invasion of Iraq.

One of the main goals of Heads Up was to help unite the majority-white sections of the anti-war movement with people of color-led anti-war efforts that had a focus on economic and racial justice at home and abroad. Heads Up did this primarily through Palestine solidarity and immigrant-rights organizing. Along the way, the collective developed an innovative organizational structure and culture based on self-education, clearly designated roles, strategic planning, regular group visioning, shared leadership, and accountable partnerships with organizations led by radicals of color. "Strategic Opportunities" is an interview with former members of Heads Up about their collective work and practice.

The remaining chapters in this section profile important organizations in other parts of the United States. In "A Struggle for Our Lives," an organizer from the Oregon-based Rural Organizing Project talks about their inventive statewide strategy for base building in rural white communities. While the right claims the rural white United States as its base and the Left pays little attention to rural communities, ROP has set out to reinvigorate rural organizing for economic justice and democracy for all, with anti-racism at the center. This chapter looks at concrete examples of their organizing efforts throughout the state, including their groundbreaking immigrant-rights work.

Crass also explores the Southern anti-racist queer organizing of the Fairness Campaign in Louisville, Kentucky. Fairness has won landmark legislation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) rights while

working from a broad strategy of multiracial movement building for collective liberation. In contrast to national organizations pursuing a narrow agenda of LGBT rights, Fairness has effectively built political power for an agenda that includes legal protections for LGBT people, living wages, immigrant rights, and an end to police violence. This interview with a founding leader of Fairness looks at stories and lessons from their work.

Finally, Crass asks members of the Groundwork Collective in Madison, Wisconsin, to reflect on their organizing during the 2011 popular occupation of the state capitol in response to the governor's attack on unions and deep cuts to social services. In many ways, the working-class Wisconsin uprising reignited mass economic justice struggle in the United States. Groundwork was in the thick of it, supporting leadership from economic and racial justice organizations in communities of color and leading efforts to move white working- and middle-class people towards a more radical multiracial justice agenda. The interview also draws lessons from the past ten years of Groundwork's efforts, including their more recent work in the Occupy movement, and insights about their organizational structure and sustainability as an all-volunteer collective focused on local and statewide anti-racist organizing in the Midwest.

Using his distinctive interview approach, Crass prompts people from each of these groups to share challenges they have faced and distill concrete organizing lessons from their experiences. Together, these interviews demonstrate the ongoing vitality of the white anti-racist organizing tradition grounded, as it must be, in broader Left movements. They also highlight valuable questions, innovations, and suggestions. In his concluding essay, "We Can Do This: Key Lessons for More Effective and Healthy Liberation Praxis," Crass synthesizes these and other lessons from throughout the book into a set of powerful recommendations for current and future organizing efforts.

By the time you get to the end of this book, you will see that one of Crass's favorite words is "praxis." This concept is important to a lot of us who care about changing the world. Sometimes, however, "praxis" is understood in an unfortunate way as simply "action + reflection" or "theory + practice." But there is no static formula for praxis. Instead, as Crass demonstrates again and again in these pages, genuine praxis has to be dynamic, grounded, and

ongoing. As activists and organizers, we develop praxis by investigating our circumstances, assessing our resources and limitations, developing plans, taking audacious collective action, making mistakes, winning victories, deepening our understanding based on our experiences, reinvigorating our vision and analysis with lessons we have learned, taking more action, and so on. This book, full of love and hope, is a major contribution to the collective praxis for social transformation that, together, we can and must create. Wherever you live and whatever kind of activist work you do, there is critical insight here for you.

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TOWARDS COLLECTIVE LIBERATION

What I Believe

When I was fifteen and started learning about radical politics, I devoured stories of how other people became active. I looked for lessons in the lives of earlier activists, such as Lucy and Albert Parsons, Emma Goldman, and Alexander Berkman. Studying how other people came to political consciousness helped me take my own initial steps forward. Reading about their lives, the movements they were part of, and the choices they made, helped me think about my own values, beliefs, and theories of how change happens. As I began experiencing the challenges of building effective efforts to confront injustices in society, I was hungry for stories of activists going through similar experiences. I read dozens of radical newspapers and zines written by activists who were my peers or more experienced than I was. I was looking for reassurance that what we were attempting to do was possible and insights for how to make it so.

When I have faced tough challenges in my efforts and felt alone and inadequate for the responsibilities of working for profound systemic changes, I often asked myself, "How can I possibly play a meaningful role in challenging the inequalities of capitalism when I'm not even aware of the ways that my own male and white privilege are hurting the people I'm working alongside?" "How can we build grassroots movements of millions of people, let alone a self-governing society based on equality and cooperation, when our twelve person activist collective is full of dysfunction and in-fighting?" "Am I radical enough, involved enough, experienced enough, well-read enough to be here?"

Capitalism and other systems of oppression are designed to make almost everyone feel inadequate, isolated, and powerless. The power of these feelings is that even though many of us experience them, and they are ingrained in the culture, most of us think we are the only ones who feel this

way. Such feelings remain with us, even as we question these systems of oppression and work to end them. This is why reading stories of other activists going through similar challenges was so helpful to me. Their experiences helped me see myself as part of the world around me, going through experiences that many others have gone through and are going through now. They helped me place my personal experience into a historical analysis of how things have come to be and a systemic analysis of how political, economic, cultural, and social power operate today. Rather than viewing the shortcomings of my activist efforts as a personal failure, I could place them into this larger framework and draw lessons about how people, organizations, and movements develop, learn, and grow from mistakes as part of the process of working for change.

Over the past twenty-three years of organizing, I've been part of dozens of organizations, coalitions, networks, study groups, project specific leadership teams, and mass direct action planning teams. My organizing efforts, in particular my years as a coordinator of Catalyst Project, have prioritized political education, supporting other groups to achieve their goals, developing social justice leaders, alliance building, and movement building. I've worked with hundreds of organizations and thousands of activists around the country, and many of them have gone through, or are going through, experiences similar to my own. Supporting people to come together and overcome isolation and feelings of inadequacy is one of the key tasks of organizers, and we can do this by developing a systemic understanding of the problems we face, nurturing relationships of solidarity and respect, building up collective power through action, and working for social change in ways that also help us grow and live our values in the here and now.

I have had the honor of doing this in white communities struggling for justice in ways that challenge white supremacy and centralizing anti-racism in their work. Additionally, I've worked with men struggling to challenge male supremacy and further feminist vision and goals in their overall social justice efforts. Organizing with people privileged by systems of oppressions still requires confronting feelings of inadequacy, isolation, and powerlessness, but it also requires working though denial, fear, guilt, and shame. Working with people privileged by systems of oppression to end those systems, opens the door to profound possibilities of creating new

identities, cultures, communities, and institutions, rooted in liberation rather than domination, for all of us.

Towards Collective Liberation is a collection of essays largely reflecting on lessons from my personal and organizational experiences of anti-racist and feminist organizing, while also exploring insights from historical examples of organizing and movement building. The book also includes a section of case study interviews with contemporary anti-racist organizers who embody the vision and strategy of collective liberation that are at the heart of this book. Throughout the process of writing and conducting interviews, I thought often of my teenage activist self and so many others going through similar journeys of becoming activists. I share my own experiences and lessons, as well as those of some of the most outstanding white anti-racist organizers in the country, with the hope that they help you in your own process of developing as an effective, healthy, and visionary long-haul activist, organizer, and leader.

We need liberation movements of millions of people, from all backgrounds, from all walks of life, with a wide range of experience, playing many different roles. Whether you have been involved in social justice work for decades or only a few weeks, the stories and lessons in the chapters to follow can help you on your path. While readers will have different levels of familiarity with all of the references, terms, and organizations mentioned in the pages to come, let me be clear: everyone reading this book is needed in the process of building the powerful and successful movements we need to make the changes crucial for our future.

Far too often when words like *patriarchy, imperialism, praxis, bottom-up democracy, anarchism,* and *white supremacy* are used, it can feel like they are meant to exclude the people who aren't already "in." Systems of oppression are, in part, processes of constant inclusions and exclusions into a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority that structures, enforces, and maintains inequality. Our activism is, significantly, a struggle against and a vision beyond this hierarchy of inequality that influences the political, economic, cultural, and social institutions of our society, as well as the way we often think. While we oppose it, our activism is nevertheless, impacted by this hierarchy, and processes of inclusions and exclusions are reproduced in our organizing.

Additionally, U.S. history of genocide, slavery, gender oppression, and class exploitation currently translates into a strong cultural assault on historical thinking and intellectual study. In particular, working-class people, women, transgender and genderqueer people, and people of color are repeatedly told by dominant society that intellectual activity and historical study are beyond their ability and are the exclusive domain of the elite. Steven Biko, the Black Consciousness leader in the South African anti-Apartheid struggle said, "The most powerful weapon of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." He argued that when the subjugated have internalized the logic of the system that oppresses and exploits them, they will submit to, maintain, and even defend the system. He therefore believed that liberating the minds of oppressed peoples was central to any movement for justice and equality. Through my organizing in white communities and with men, I've learned how important it is to liberate the minds of those privileged by system of oppression, in particular those who are also simultaneously exploited and oppressed themselves (i.e., white people who are also working-class or men who are also Black). In order to do this, we need to maintain an insurgent grassroots intellectual culture that helps us to learn from history, study theory, use our political imagination, and apply our knowledge in innovative ways to our organizing. Individual and collective consciousness raising, visioning, action, and reflection are key to this process. This book is intended as a contribution to that culture and process.

The primary goal of *Towards Collective Liberation* is to help our movements further develop the visions, strategies, cultures, organizations, practices, and relationships we need to build and win a democratic and socialist society. To further this goal, I would like to share some of the core beliefs that guide me as an organizer and author, and that are the foundation of this book.

I believe that all people have a right to quality housing, healthy food, dynamic education, meaningful work, accessible healthcare, and vibrant communities with infrastructure that serves people of all ages and abilities. I believe that people, individually and collectively, have tremendous power to make changes in their lives, communities, and society, to live our values and strive for our dreams. I believe that the history of how things have come to be the way they are is profoundly important to understanding the world

around us, who we are in the world, and what kind of a world we want to live in.

I believe that in the United States, race, class, and gender are socially constructed categories that organize people into a hierarchy of power, privilege, and oppression. Our place in the hierarchy, while it doesn't define us, has a major impact on the opportunities, resources, and experiences of our lives. I believe that capitalism is a constant process of colonization and exploitation of working people and the earth. However, I also believe that we can create alternative economic models that unleash the creative and productive capacities of our societies in ways that distribute resources fairly, and respects our shared dignity and ecosystem. I believe that patriarchy's devaluing assault on women's lives and work is the backbone of capitalism and that white supremacy is central to how the class structure in the United States has developed. I believe the social norms, economic practices, and political institutions of our society were created through complex historical processes that we can study and understand. Doing so allows us to play important roles in these ongoing processes. I believe in the need for revolutionary change that challenges the deeply rooted, legislated, and enforced inequality and injustice in our society. I believe in revolutionary change that works towards widespread and popularly supported gains for economic, racial, gender, environmental, and social justice. I believe in revolutionary non-violence that prioritizes non-violent methods of confrontation with oppression and exploitation, while actively creating the alternatives we seek and need. I believe powerful grassroots people's movements are the primary way we can win and create these changes.

I believe that people's movements show us the beauty, resilience, creativity, and heroic courage of everyday people. Going on strike, raising kids with liberation values, leading faith communities to take action, singing at a mass meeting, doing childcare while parents plan a demonstration, outing yourself as queer or undocumented, acting from your politics in your workplace, or providing emotional support to others as we take risks all heal and grow in our work for liberation. There are thousands of ways that we practice liberation values in the ways we love, live, play, create, and work, while simultaneously organizing and struggling for large-scale change in our workplaces, schools, communities, and institutions throughout society. I also believe that our efforts to build people's movements and make positive

changes are regularly undermined by the divisions of race, class, and gender. I believe that we can proactively take on these divisions as part of our overall vision and strategy for change and will build much more powerful, healthy, effective, and visionary movements in doing so.

I believe that we need to organize ourselves as a Left to help build the popular, broad-based movements we need. I believe that ideas, insights, and leadership from different Left traditions, such as anarchism, Marxism, feminism, revolutionary nationalism, queer liberation, and revolutionary non-violence are needed as we create a political movement that draws the best from the past and opens space for new visions, ideas, and strategies. I believe that in order to build the multiracial movement we need, white organizers and leaders with a vision of collective liberation need to organize large numbers of white people to work for systemic justice while actively confronting the divide-and-rule strategy of white supremacy. I believe that in order for our movements to be successful, they need to make feminist vision, strategy, and culture central; men of all backgrounds and with various degrees of access to male privilege can play a powerful role in this, in part, by organizing other men to work for a feminist transformation of our lives, families, communities, institutions, and society.

Towards Collective Liberation is not my attempt to put forward definitive answers to the questions before us. Rather, this book is an offering of experiences and lessons based on how I and many others have addressed these questions, with the goal that it will help the reader further develop their own guiding beliefs and theories of how change happens. What we are up against is often what brings us into the movement. Having vision, analysis, and strategy helps us not just stay in the movement but be part of creating successful movements that challenge systems of oppression and help us create systems of liberation. One of the key lessons throughout this book is that we do not simply come up with answers to the questions before us and then apply them. Our answers are continually evolving through a process of studying, developing ideas, putting them into practice, reflecting on our practice, getting feedback on our practice, drawing lessons, and further developing our beliefs and strategies accordingly. I hope this book helps you in your own process of creating liberation praxis. I believe in our ability to win, every day, in subtle and profound ways that move our society

towards collective liberation. Let us move forward, with vision, courage, and love, together.

A Note about the Term "Collective Liberation"

"Collective liberation" comes from bell hooks's essay "Love as the Practice of Freedom" in her book *Outlaw Culture*. She writes, "Until we are all able to accept the interlocking, interdependent nature of systems of domination and recognize specific ways each system is maintained, we will continue to act in ways that undermine our individual quest for freedom and collective liberation struggle." When I first read this groundbreaking essay, I was wrestling with questions of how to bridge the politics of the majority-white anarchist-oriented Left with the history and analysis I was studying in college. I went to college to learn as much as I could about movement building and focused my study on women of color feminism, freedom movements in communities of color, and multiracial class struggles. The concept of collective liberation from bell hooks resonated deeply. I wanted to know how to develop transformative liberation politics and effective organizing strategy for white people and for men that would help align people with privilege to oppressed peoples' struggles united by an overall vision of a free society. In my political organizing and in my college study, the more I focused on feminism, the more often I was the only man. Similarly, the more I focused on racial justice and organizing in communities of color, the more I was the only white person. Often white people and men I talked with about anti-racism and feminism responded, "Those are politics about other people's liberation." This response was in part because one of the only ways I, and many others, knew how to talk about anti-racism with white people and feminism with men was by challenging them.

Challenging racism and sexism in this way was an important intervention to support majority-people of color and majority-women organizing efforts. But to build broad support for anti-racism in white communities and for feminism among men, it is also necessary to move large numbers of white people and men into active participation in a multiracial, feminist movement for democracy and socialism; intervening

on oppression, then, is necessary, but not enough. What would it look like for white people to develop anti-racist consciousness that unites them with communities of color working for justice and helps white people decolonize their minds from internalized white superiority? What would it look like for men to develop as feminists in a way that helps them decolonize their minds from internalized male supremacy as they become more effective and powerful activists working for an overall justice agenda with feminism at the center? What would it look like for middle- and upper-class people to decolonize their minds from capitalism to work in solidarity with working-class and poor people for an economic justice agenda with socialist values?

If systems of domination are interconnected, then systems of liberation are also interconnected. If systems of liberation are interconnected, then we must help white people, men, and middle- and upper-class people create and win these systems and go through a transformative process of change while working for systemic change. While personal transformation has always been part of anti-oppression politics, interconnected liberation brings with it a vision that creates more space for possibilities of who we are becoming, as opposed to just knowing what and how we do not want to be.

The term "collective liberation" and hooks's overall analysis of interconnected liberation resonated with my anarchist politics as I was searching to work with communities whose privilege aligns them to a ruling-class worldview and agenda, even when that ruling-class worldview and agenda is destroying their lives. With that, collective liberation as a vision of what we want and a strategic framework to help us get there, became core to my politics and organizing. There are clearly many ways that different people and communities interpret what collective liberation strategy looks like. A commitment to use different strategies and approaches in the service of an overall vision of collective liberation is crucial to me.

Section I

"While Learning from the Past, We Work to Create a New World": Building the Anarchist Left

A NEW WORLD IN OUR HEARTS

Anarchism and the Need for Dynamic and Visionary Left Politics

I found Paul Avrich's book *The Haymarket Tragedy* in the library while I was a freshman in high school and read it every chance I could. In doing so, I was transported from my Southern California suburb to the working-class, largely European immigrant, communities of Chicago and followed the lives of leading anarchist labor organizers who fought to build unions while also creating a vibrant culture of socialist theatre groups, community dances, athletic clubs, newspapers, singing groups, and schools. They took on the bosses and the state; they built a highly successful national campaign that successfully utilized the general strike. Some of them lost their lives. Ultimately, they won concrete improvements while invigorating an international working-class radical movement whose visions, analysis, victories, defeats, and legacies are still with us today.

The values of solidarity and collective action clashed with the alienation and individualism I felt all around me. Thus, when friends and I started an activist group, we were influenced not only by the anarchism of political punk music, but also began studying the theory and history of anarchism to help us develop our politics and plan of action. The strategy of working for immediate gains such as the eight-hour work day, the weekend, and improved working conditions, while simultaneously agitating against capitalism and for a democratic socialist society, ignited hope and possibility for ways we could take on war, poverty, and the suffocating culture of consumer capitalism. The connection I felt to a historical tradition of struggle for liberation was like a balm to the wounds I didn't even know I had from growing up in the post-civil rights, Reagan-era right-wing backlash, assaults on historical memory, and the "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" myth that marked life in white working- and middle-class America in the 1980s.

For more than two decades, anarchist politics and a connection to the anarchist tradition have been fundamental to my efforts to build powerful working class-based, feminist, multiracial movements. Anarchism for me, however, is not a strict orthodoxy of beliefs. We can draw a lot from the anarchist tradition to help guide us forward, but a good amount of what I think we can learn is from the failures and shortcomings of anarchist politics. I believe in a praxis-based organizing approach in which we develop our analysis and strategy through a process that combines education, practice, reflection, and synthesis, so that our ideas and practices are evolving. While I draw from the anarchist tradition outlined in this chapter, one of the goals of this book is to break down ideological barriers in anarchist and radical politics that limit our ability to have a praxis-based organizing practice that encourages us to evolve and grow. Far too often, maintaining a correct line of what is and isn't radical leads to political conformity in Left activist circles that stifles political and personal growth and leads to a culture of insecurity and infighting based on proving one's radical credentials. This culture of "more radical than thou" isn't welcoming, supportive, sustainable, healthy, or successful in achieving our goals.

One of the main lessons throughout this book is that we need a revitalized, dynamic, and visionary Left politics that draws from many traditions, not just anarchism, but also Marxism, socialism, feminism, revolutionary nationalism, and others. Additionally, I believe we need to draw insights, lessons, and examples from liberation struggles in communities of color, from working class-based struggles in the labor movement, from the struggle for queer liberation, and many other struggles and liberation movements in the United States and around the world. Furthermore, we need space to acknowledge and learn from the failures, mistakes, and shortcomings of all our traditions and struggles to draw lessons and insights and to help us stay humble and open. In order for us to develop the politics we need, we must also create the culture we need to support us.[1]

We need Left culture that encourages growth and learning. We need culture that celebrates and nourishes the creativity, beauty, and joy of this world while we struggle against oppression and exploitation. We need culture that builds people up rather than tearing them down. We need

culture that reminds us that there are many paths to the goals we seek, rather than one right answer. We need culture that nurtures, teaches, and encourages us to win and create the changes in society we need.

The goal of this essay is to provide a basic introduction to anarchist ideas and history as a window into an important set of politics and experiences critical for developing effective and visionary Left politics.

Anarchism and Contemporary Left Organizing

Anarchist organizations, strategies, methods and visions played a leading role in the economic justice upsurge of the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011 that ignited the imagination of millions of people who participated in the largest Left-based movement in a generation. From general assemblies for decision-making to the emphasis on direct action as both a tactic of protest and strategy to build people-powered democratic movements and society, the Occupy movement revitalized Left politics and action in mainstream society.

At the turn of the past century, anarchist organizations, strategies, methods, and visions also played a leading role in the mass action convergences of the global justice movement in Seattle and beyond, with tens of thousands using anarchist organizing structures like affinity groups, spokescouncils, and consensus decision-making to take direct action. Again, direct action served as both a tactical way to confront unjust institutions of the global ruling class, such as the World Trade Organization, and a strategy for everyday people to take action beyond the rules of capitalism, opening a window to the world we seek to create. In both the Occupy movement and the global justice movement, anarchist influence is expressed in understanding that the power to make systemic social change come from the bottom up and that we must create what we are for while we work against what we oppose,

At the grassroots level around the country, groups and projects that are either explicitly anarchist or anarchist influenced are working for economic, racial, gender, environmental, and social justice. Anarchism operates as a theoretical framework to understand the world and an ethical approach to revolutionary social change. Most anarchists are also socialists and analyze

society and social change from a socialist framework with an anarchist analysis of political and social power in addition to a materialist analysis of the economy. This leads anarchists to work not only against capitalism and the state but also patriarchy, white supremacy, and authoritarianism.

The principles of mutual aid, grassroots democracy, and equality that form the core of anarchism have been practiced in many societies and cultures around the world. Anarchists have looked to the communal practices of peasant societies, working-class mutual aid associations and unions, and the everyday cooperative practices in neighborhoods and families for guidance in developing a vision for a free society shaped by equality rather than injustice. As a political force, anarchism developed primarily in working-class and peasant communities throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas in the late 1800s and influenced early union movements alongside the rise of industrial capitalism. From the late 1880s to the present, there have been many different types of anarchists, drawing on traditions from around the world and advocating universal human rights across race, gender, and nationality. There has never been a monolithic anarchist theory, tendency, or movement throughout history; there is not one anarchism, but many. Through studying this history, we can draw out its most useful aspects.

Today many anarchists work in anarchist groups and projects and many more are active in broader social justice efforts through their community groups, unions, workplaces, parent associations, places of worship, schools, and a vast array of formal and informal cooperative efforts from community gardens to childcare. Most anarchists do not wear their anarchist politics on their sleeves but practice them in their broader political work, families, communities, and organizations. Many are reluctant to identify as anarchists, even though they share core principles, because of the historic baggage that comes with the name, or because political labels can create obstacles when engaged in broad-based organizing. Many don't identify as anarchists or have moved away from anarchism altogether because of significant shortcomings in the actual practice and dominant subculture of contemporary anarchism.

The political baggage of anarchism has its roots in repression against anarchists, as well as within anarchism itself. In efforts to undermine anarchist ideas in society and anarchist leadership within labor and social

movements, the ruling class has equated anarchism with chaos, violence, and destruction. Anarchist-led unions and organizations have historically been targets of violent repression from the state and the bosses with organizations' offices raided and their leaders arrested, deported, executed, and assassinated. The association of anarchism to chaos and violence has had a powerful effect, inoculating people to the ideas of worker and community self-management, of a society run cooperatively without economic inequality. Throughout society, anti-anarchist ideas are part of a larger anti-Left, anti-socialist effort to present capitalism and top-down authoritarianism as the only option. There can also be distrust of anarchists within the Left and broader social justice movements. This is largely due to controversial and at times counterproductive anarchist practices (frequently sensationalized by corporate media and the state as "violent attacks against society") that have come to represent the totality of anarchism. There have also been a wide range of harmful practices by anarchists who have disrespected local organizing or have alienated many through arrogant attitudes of political superiority.

In this essay, however, I focus not on the differences that may have alienated anarchists from each other or the broader Left, but on mass anarchism or movement-based anarchism informed by the ability of everyday people to organize popular movements against systemic exploitation and oppression and work for social transformation towards mutual aid, cooperation, egalitarianism, self-determination, democracy, and socialism.[2] There are many different tendencies of anarchism, and always have been. However most anarchists embrace the movement-based anarchist understanding that socialist values must be developed, supported, and expanded in the culture and institutions of society over the course of struggle. In other words: socialism will not drop from the sky because many have risen up against oppression, although such uprisings are critically important; socialism develops through the collective choices, actions, and practices of a people over time in the course of struggling for their freedom, dignity, and collective future. When I speak of movement-based anarchism, it includes anarcho-syndicalism, libertarian socialism, anarcha-feminism, social ecology, anarcho-pacifism, and the most common, anarcho-

communism. When I use the term *anarchism,* I invoke the best from each of these historical traditions and current practices.[3]

An Introduction to the Anarchist Tradition

Anarchism is a political tradition, a theoretical framework and an organizing practice that opposes tyranny in all forms and works to create liberatory social organizations that maximize equality, freedom, and cooperation while minimizing coercion, oppression, and exploitation. Rooted in the anti-capitalist socialist tradition, anarchism developed a critique of illegitimate authority that included the state and patriarchy. From the 1800s through the early 1900s, anarchism was the primary socialist politics in many parts of the world including China, Japan, Korea, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Italy, and Spain.[4] Anarchism, like other Left traditions, has changed in many ways through more than a hundred years of struggles. Yet some basic debates and insights from the movement's earliest years still continue to serve as guideposts today

Classical anarchist theorists such as Russians Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin agreed with Marx's critique of capitalism and his understanding of historical materialism.[5] The early anarchists and Marxists agreed that the working class was a primary revolutionary force for socialism because of its role in the economy and its lived experience of exploitation, and that working-class people exercising political power was key to building a socialist society. However, these anarchists also challenged the Marxists by arguing that a classless and stateless society could not be built through seizing the state, establishing a "dictatorship of the proletariat" and centralizing power in a vanguard leadership body. They believed a system of planning and coordination would be necessary but emphasized the decentralization of power into the hands of everyday people. They envisioned self-management of the economy through democratic worker associations and self-governance through community associations and popular assemblies. They believed that regions could organize to exchange resources and culture, and that larger-scale federations would develop to facilitate communication and cooperation around the world. Based on this disagreement about the role of the existing state with Marx and Marxists,

anarchists differentiated between authoritarian and libertarian socialism. As Bakunin wrote, "Freedom without socialism is privilege and injustice, and socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality."

Anarchists argued that the state has both a material and ideological basis in domination, and reproduces inequality by design, regardless of the intent of those in power. As the state developed out of the needs of ruling classes to maintain and perpetuate inequality, it is not a system designed for the people of a society to make decisions about their communities and lives. Rather, it serves to advance and enforce the laws and logic of the ruling class. Thus, the anarchists believed that political power must be organized from the bottom up and remain rooted in the people through self-governing institutions. For revolutionaries to set their eyes on the existing state as the form of working-class power in a revolutionary society was to condemn the revolution to reproducing a new ruling class.

Anarchist theorists believed that revolutionaries should work for social change and be prepared to play leading roles to build organizations and campaigns that are crucial to bring about mass movement, but that the people themselves ultimately create mass movements, and have the power to counter and defeat systemic injustice as well as win and create systemic liberation. Anarchists such as Emma Goldman believed in the creative power of everyday people to develop liberatory alternatives in the course of struggle. She argued that as people expand freedom through collective action, their ability to imagine what freedom looks like will also expand.

Anarchists warned that any revolutionary organization that sees itself as a constant vanguard leading the revolution was building the foundation for the tyranny of an elite to dominate the masses during and after revolutionary change. Many anarchists believed in the need for revolutionary organizations to play leadership roles in mass movements but maintained that this leadership must come from democratic consent and respect from within the mass movement in order to be legitimate. For example, they believed that revolutionaries could and should bring all their talents, skills, and resources to help movements achieve their goals, but that in that process, leadership should not be assumed, but earned. Furthermore, they rejected the idea that any one person or organization should become a permanent leader, and argued for leadership structures that allowed for more and more people to share in the responsibilities of leadership.

While anarchists and Marxists debated the role of the state in revolutionary change, they all pointed to the self-governing structures of the short-lived Paris Commune in 1871 as an example of how working people could reorganize society. During the Commune, working-class communities were in control of Paris for two months, and formed popular assemblies to organize public life and defend themselves from the state and the ruling class. They passed resolutions for women's equality and the rights of workers. The high degree of cooperation and unity between many different radical forces led many to look to the Commune for both inspiration and guidance. That both anarchists and Marxists claimed the Commune as an example for future working-class movements demonstrates two things. First, that anarchists and Marxists have a much higher level of political unity than is often understood. Second, that in the course of struggle, oppressed people have historically developed new forms of social organization that advance democracy and equality. For anarchists, constantly learning from the new forms of social organization requires a commitment to constantly update and renew the strategy and vision of revolutionary politics.

The anarchist vision, one shared by many on the Left, looks to social organization that decentralizes power and is controlled from the bottom up. These local forms of community-based self-governance would then federate regionally and globally to meet economic, social and cultural needs and wants.[6] To get there, the classical anarchist theorists advanced the strategy of mass collective struggle against the ruling class to open and win the political space for socialism to develop from below. In general, the anarchist tradition has been vague in its articulation of how to transition from capitalism to socialism on a large scale. However, in keeping with the commitment to support and prepare people to take democratic control over their lives and build justice and equality in the process of struggle, anarchists have put forward the strategy of prefigurative politics as a way to begin building the new world in the shell of the old.

Prefigurative politics is the strategy of incorporating the vision of the future society into the struggle to get there. If the fight is for a democratic society, then revolutionaries must incorporate as many democratic practices as possible into the struggle to get there. Through the experience of utilizing democratic methods in the course of struggle, people build their individual

and collective skills and experience to live democratically and in the process create democratic cultural values, and generate democratic practices to be utilized and improved upon. This is one of the reasons that anarchists have championed mass worker organizations and direct action, not because they believed that willpower alone could make a revolution but because they believed the struggle itself was the greatest teacher.

Anarchists believe that people gain a new understanding of reality through exercising their individual and collective power. This happens not just because ideas are tested against reality and evolve, but because people begin to see themselves as agents of change who can influence the world around them. The educational experience of putting ideas into practice is therefore prioritized by anarchists, who see the revolutionary potential of fights for incremental change as opportunities for people to build their own power and see themselves as capable of winning larger-scale change. Since they believe that the ultimate goal is not to seize and exercise existing power but to radically redistribute and reorganize it, they insist that the more people experience their own power through struggle and begin incorporating revolutionary values into their daily practice, the more the movement could prefigure the society it is working to build.

Towards these aims, anarchists organized in or built mass worker unions such as the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) in France, The National Confederation of Labour (CNT) in Spain, and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the United States. In addition to fighting for wage increases and better working conditions, these unions fostered solidarity between workers and had a goal of workers taking control of the economy and running it democratically without bosses. Prefigurative politics has also led anarchists to build cooperative workplaces, housing, schools, community centers, mutual aid institutions, and barter systems. Through time, anarchists have further interpreted the possibility of prefigurative politics to challenge patriarchal relationships between men and women; rejected the strategy of electoral politics as the sole arena of struggle in favor of direct action strategies; created democratic structures in organizations; and emphasized liberatory power of education for people of all ages.

During the late 1800s to the mid-1900s, many socialists, and anarchists believed that working-class people could seize the means of production and bring down the capitalist state through general strikes. They believed that

liberatory forms of social organization would form in the course of struggle, as worker and neighborhood councils did during the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution of 1905, and in worker uprisings in Italy and Spain in the 1910s. Through these new forms of social organization, working people could utilize a dual power strategy to challenge and replace the state.

The term "dual power" was first used by the Russian Marxist Vladimir Lenin to describe the decentralized worker- and peasant-based soviets through which oppressed classes fought for economic equality. The strategy of dual power means that oppressed people can simultaneously organize themselves to fight against the state, and create democratic institutions that prefigure the new forms of social organization of a socialist society. Through dual power institutions, everyday people thus forged new and liberatory ways of exercising power and making decisions that would then teach millions how to organize from the bottom up to reorganize society based on values of cooperation and egalitarianism. Anarchists believed that the consistent practice of prefigurative politics would build the capacity of working-class people to make the most of revolutionary situations given their higher level of lived experience. While I emphasize here the strategic understanding of prefigurative politics, it is worth mentioning that testing your politics in practice and bringing liberatory principles into daily life is also understood as a more fulfilling way to live in the here and now. Anarchists believe that the revolution is not just a vision of a future society; it is the way that we live our lives, build our families and communities, and celebrate while also struggling for systemic change.

In the late 1800s, hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Europe and Asia worked in the United States and many brought their Left politics with them.

Anarchism in the United States, 1886–1990s

In the United States, anarchists have been a leading force in the socialist movement since the late nineteenth century. The anarchist-based International Working People's Association helped lead a mass movement for the eight-hour workday and organized a nationwide general strike on May 1, 1886. Leading members of the movement in Chicago were framed,

put on trial, and executed by the state in 1887. Their struggle and martyrdom inspired working-class movements around the world to declare May 1 as International Workers' Day. Lucy Parsons was a leading orator, journalist and organizer in the Chicago anarchist movement and her husband, Albert Parsons, was one of the five leaders sentenced to death. Lucy, who was Mexican and African American, became a national leader as she spoke at worker rallies and meetings around the country. In 1891 Lucy Parsons began editing *Freedom: A Revolutionary Anarchist-Communist Monthly* that provided news and analysis of worker organizing and resistance. In 1905, she joined with other socialists and anarchists and co-founded the IWW, which organized tens of thousands of workers across race, ethnic, national, gender, and trade lines to build a union of the working class.[7] Also in 1905, she began editing an IWW newspaper, *The Liberator,* which covered news of IWW efforts and also took stands for birth control and women's rights. The IWW led free-speech fights to win the right to organize, and thousands went to jail for talking union. In 1912, the IWW led the Bread and Roses strike of thirty thousand textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, that garnered international support.[8] IWW organizers like Joe Hill produced dozens of labor songs, such as "Solidarity Forever" that became the soul of a vibrant working-class culture. Though it had over one hundred thousand members, the IWW was severely weakened by government repression during World War I when the state raided the organization's offices, jailed thousands, deported hundreds, and assassinated or executed dozens of its members.

Also during this time, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, working-class Jewish immigrant anarchist leaders, worked for reproductive freedom for poor and working-class women, led political education for workers, and organized draft resistance against the First World War. Goldman made important contributions to Left politics by arguing that politics existed in people's personal lives and highlighted what this meant for women in particular. While organizing for better working conditions, Goldman also campaigned for the power of working-class women to control their own lives in their families, romantic relationships, and communities. She helped bring issues of women's sexuality, motherhood, and marriage into working-class socialist movements, all from the perspective that women

are and should be treated as free people who can choose how to live their lives. Berkman and Goldman also wrote and lectured about homosexuality and the need to defend and expand sexual freedom. Both Berkman and Goldman lectured around the country, wrote for the socialist labor press, and published dozens of essays, and books on anarchist politics for working-class audiences. Consequently, both were imprisoned and deported from the United States, largely because of their organizing against World War I. They were among thousands who faced the same repression.[9]

During the early 1900s, Ricardo Flores Magón and the anarchist-led Mexican Liberal Party also organized for revolution in Mexico. Magón, who came from a poor family, put forward a vision of Mexico that included land for the peasants and control of industry for the workers. The Magonistas were the first in Mexico to have women labor leaders formally representing their unions. They put forward a revolutionary vision that united many sectors of Mexican society, including Mexicans living in the Southwest of United States, which has been part of Mexico before U.S. colonization. The Mexican anarchists, based mostly in the working class, united politically with the peasant-based movement led by Emiliano Zapata. However, the forced exile of many Magonistas, (including Magón himself), into the United States undermined plans to unite the revolutionary forces during the Mexican Revolution. From within the United States, the Magonistas organized thousands of Mexican workers in the Southwest under the banner "Tierra y Libertad," which then became the slogan of the twentieth century Zapatistas. With the ruling classes of both Mexico and the United States working against them, the Magonista movement was crushed by state repression. Many of the Magonistas in the United States were arrested and deported; Ricardo Flores Magón was imprisoned in the United States in 1918 under the Espionage Act. He died in prison in 1922 and over ten thousand people marched in his funeral procession in Mexico City.

From 1880 through 1940, approximately five hundred anarchist newspapers were published in over a dozen languages in the United States. In addition to unions, media and what we would now call activist groups (i.e., anti-war, feminist, and political prisoner support), there were anarchist schools, cultural centers, theatre groups, orchestras, sports clubs, housing cooperatives, mutual aid societies, and worker cooperatives. However, the

working class-based anarchist movement significantly weakened by the end of the 1920s. Italian immigrant labor agitators Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were arrested and executed by the state in 1927, during the red scare that led to the imprisonment, exile, or assassination of thousands of other anarchists, socialists, and communists. In the 1930s, the Communist Party became the dominant force in the socialist Left. Meanwhile, two main trends in the anarchist movement developed over the next two decades: ongoing work in the labor movement and the faith-based Left. Anarchist organizers operated primarily in the AFL and CIO, as opposed to anarchist specific unions. Rose Pesotta, for example, was an organizer and the first woman vice-president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union during the 1930s through 1950s.[10] Through her position, she developed programs based on social unionism that connected labor and community issues. One way to do this, she believed, was to prioritize adult education.[11] Consequently, she helped build labor colleges for workers and advocated for an educational model based on the lived experiences of the workers themselves.

The faith-based tradition became a force of its own with the founding of the Catholic Worker movement by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in 1933. The Catholic Worker combined the Christian anarchism of Leo Tolstoy with Dorothy Day's communism and Catholicism to create a spiritually based Left political movement.[12] Thousands of mostly white poor and working-class people joined the Catholic Workers with the mission of serving poor people, immigrants, refugees and women through social services with a social justice orientation and vision. They built hundreds of Houses of Hospitality that provide food and resources in spaces committed to also providing respect and community. The Catholic Worker houses, community centers, and farms around the country also sheltered and housed a growing radical pacifist movement. In the 1940s and 1950s, anarcho-pacifists in the War Resisters League, Fellowship of Reconciliation, American Friends Service Committee, and the Catholic Worker brought together Gandhian non-violent civil disobedience, Quaker-based consensus decision-making and a prefigurative direct action methodology of social change. They developed a post-World War II radicalism in publications like the *Catholic Worker, Liberation,* and *Direct Action.* It was a radical, collaborative

movement struggling to understand the Nazi Holocaust, the massacres of civilians caused by the U.S. nuclear attack on Japan, and the emerging permanent militarism of the Cold War defined by potential atomic annihilation. Their radicalism continued to foreground economic justice, but increasingly discussed the need for a systemic change in the culture and social practices of society. They actively supported the emerging civil rights movement and began building an anti-war movement. For example, anarcho-pacifists in the Bay Area formed the Libertarian Circle in the late 1940s that influenced the Beat Generation and founded the Left radio station KPFA/Pacifica.[13]

The resurgence of student and youth activism in the 1960s brought anarchist and socialist principles to the forefront of social movements. In the white Left, queer anarchist Paul Goodman, along with Noam Chomsky, David Dellinger, and Howard Zinn provided a major theoretical and practical framework for the movement. Zinn mixed Marxist and anarchist principles with an understanding of U.S.-based resistance traditions, particularly those from workingclass communities and communities of color, to help build the New Left. Anarchist strategic frameworks of decentralization of power, non-hierarchical organizing, and an overall anti-statist orientation to social change mushroomed around the country. The radical pacifists played a major role supporting the early civil rights movement and the strategy of non-violent direct action came to the forefront of the Left through the Black liberation struggle. The grassroots participatory democracy that characterized the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the organizing tradition of Ella Baker had a major influence on all the social movements of the 1960s. Baker's egalitarian socialism advanced politics and organizing practices that helped reinvigorate anti-authoritarian, democratic organizing traditions in the New Left. In the women's liberation movement, anarcha-feminists helped develop an autonomous women's movement to set their own agenda for change and a radical feminist analysis to understand society. Peggy Kornegger, Carol Erhlich, and many others, particularly women of color feminists, took up the slogan "the personal is political and the political is personal" and helped develop new understands of domination and power that broadened anarchist and socialist politics. Anarcha-feminists helped build an

autonomous women's movement that set up rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters for women, women's self-defense classes, women's health clinics, and cultural and social centers.[14]

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Murray Bookchin and other social ecologists brought an anti-capitalist, democratic politics to the growing environmental movement calling for appropriate technology, sustainable agricultural, and a rational economy based on people over profit. Bookchin played an important role in defining anarchism as being opposed to social domination in all forms, including human domination of nature. Through the 1970s, millions of people formed communes and built Left bookstores, health food co-ops and other worker owned businesses. In this milieu, anarchist and socialist politics continued to spread, and feminist, ecological, and Left politics took on institutional forms in communities around the country.[15]

Anarchism became the defining politics of the growing anti-nuclear and environmental movements in the 1970s and 1980s. While working to end the nuclear arms race and demilitarize society, hundreds of thousands participated in affinity group actions with spokescouncils, using consensus decision-making in a prefigurative direct action strategy of change. The anti-authoritarian national network Movement for a New Society and anarcha-feminists like Starhawk and others played major roles in fusing together the key components of what many today understand as non-violent direct action. Anarchists were also involved in Central American solidarity, gay and lesbian rights, and anti-apartheid movements in the 1980s.[16]

The labor movement trend in anarchism suffered greatly during the McCarthy era, as did the Left generally. The IWW continued, although it was much smaller. The Jewish anarchist newspaper *Fraye Arbeter Shtime (Free Voice of Labor),* founded in 1890, was published monthly until 1977. Anarchists were leaders in the Jewish socialist Workman's Circles that provided health benefits, burial plots, and life insurance for working people along with educational and cultural events.[17] Individual anarchists continued playing leading roles in working-class organizations around the country, but anarchism as a whole was no longer a working class-based movement. However, new signs of life were emerging for a working-class politics based in communities of color. In the 1970s, political prisoner

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin wrote *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*. Ervin, a former organizer with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Black Panther Party, challenged the mostly white anarchist movement to take up the struggle against white supremacy, support Black self-determination and learn from the Black Nationalist tradition. Ervin called for a fusion of anarchism and Black Nationalism to create a Black autonomist politics for working-class organizing in the Black community.[18]

A younger, post-World War II generation of class struggle anarchists came together to form the Anarchist Communist Federation in the late 1970s and the Workers Solidarity Alliance in 1984. Both were small associations for people committed to working-class organizing. During this time, many socialist anarchists were also involved in various working-class organizations in their neighborhoods or workplaces through community organizations and the AFL-CIO.

In 1986, to commemorate the hundred-year anniversary of the May 1 movement for an eight-hour workday, over 400 people participated in the Haymarket International Anarchist Gathering in Chicago. This was followed by the Building the Movement Anarchist Gathering in 1987 in Minneapolis, attended by 250 people; the Anarchist Survival Gathering in Toronto in 1988 with 800 people; and the Without Borders Anarchist Gathering in San Francisco in 1989 with 1,500 people. These gatherings brought together a largely young generation of white radicals along with more seasoned activists from the labor, anti-war, anti-nuke, feminist, and queer movements. Over the course of these four gatherings, a conversation arose about the need for a continental anarchist network and newspaper to serve the growing anarchist movement active in multiple struggles. The result was Love and Rage, founded in 1989, which served as both a network of dozens of younger-generation anarchist groups and a newspaper that focused on feminism, queer liberation, anti-imperialist and anti-colonial national liberation movements, global political economy, people of color and working class-led struggles around the world, the prison system, and anarchist activism. Love and Rage was only one part of the broader anarchist movement, but for many it was a clear example of the much larger project in the early 1990s of developing a revitalized Left politics to guide political organizing.[19] Love and Rage focused on developing relevant theory and

grassroots activism, and helped bring together and influence a whole new generation of anarchists. In 1990, our activist group joined Love and Rage.

Throughout the 1990s, anarchists played leading roles in grassroots activist networks such as Anti-Racist Action, Earth First!, Food Not Bombs, Anarchist Black Cross, Books to Prisoners, Homes Not Jails, the Industrial Workers of the World, Lesbian Avengers, the Anarchist Youth Federation, and Art and Revolution. Anarchists around the United States were involved in struggles against the Gulf War, to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and work in solidarity with the Zapatistas, who emerged as a leading force in building a new global movement against imperialism. Primarily based in white subcultural youth communities, anarchists throughout the 1990s worked to renew socialist politics and practice with an anti-authoritarian orientation.

The Dynamic Challenge of Anarchist Politics for Liberation Movements Today

One of the major themes running through anarchist history is the strategy of prefigurative politics, formed by several core beliefs in the anarchist tradition. First, that social change is not about replacing one ruling class for another, but transforming the social relationships of society away from domination towards democracy and equality. To create systemic social change requires mass social movements of people to challenge the current injustice and fight for something better to replace it. People are the driving force of history and people will voluntarily, through education and organization, make movements that make history. No individual or organization makes a revolution alone, although it is individuals and organizations that converge to make revolutionary change. Anarchists believe that the struggle itself is the greatest teacher, as people put their politics in practice and gain a deeper understanding of their own power to be historical actors. They also argue that the organizations and campaigns we build should actively develop the capacity of working-class and oppressed people to reorganize society for the benefit of all and govern themselves. Given these understandings of social change, prefigurative politics challenge us to create liberatory processes and practices in the here and now while we fight for the future. This means bringing feminist politics

into our daily lives and organizations as much as we can, while recognizing that we need to engage in long-term collective struggle against patriarchy as a system of oppression. Similarly, we should work to understand anti-racism as not only a politics against systemic racism, but for anti-racist culture, strategy, and practice in our organizations and lives that transforms the ways we work for liberation.

Further, anarchists do not believe that there will be one revolutionary transformation of society that will lead to a classless, stateless, peaceful co-existence. Rather, social change is an ongoing process of evolution marked by periods of revolutionary change that accelerate that evolution. Prefigurative politics challenge us to understand how the methods we use to achieve our goals will influence and shape the ends we achieve. Today, many anarchists believe in prefigurative politics and it is a core principle that shapes the Left today.

The tension in anarchist strategy, then, has been one of determining how to practice liberatory politics in ways that positively impacts those involved and still has real positive impacts for short-term and long-term gains in society. The challenge is developing prefigurative strategy that helps us create efforts that further liberatory practices, culture, and organization in the here and now, while also working to build popular movements to transform society. Left organizations face the economic, social, cultural, and political conditions in which they operate, while simultaneously striving to change those conditions.

The main issue at hand is not how to accept the limitations of existing society but how to understand the economic, political, social, and cultural dynamics of society so we can be radical, relevant, strategic, and visionary as we participate in the reality of everyday life to build the new world in the shell of the old.[20] This requires a long-term perspective of change that understands contradictions as a part of an evolving process of doing the best we can in conditions not of our making. This means developing strategy that supports people's personal and political development, builds organizations and community through struggles to concretely change the conditions in which we live and through those struggles builds the power of the Left to transform society. Prefigurative politics and strategies need to be flexible and constantly evolving. There can be a danger of prefigurative politics coming

to mean a handful of practices and strategies that are always used. For example, I believe in the need for prefigurative strategies for waging reform and electoral-based campaigns. I believe prefigurative politics can include a wide range of decision-making processes beyond just consensus and that different forms of leadership that includes horizontal and hierarchical structures are necessary depending on the situation. I believe we need to imagine and create prefigurative organizing practices that work for people of different ages, cultures, capabilities, economic classes, responsibilities, and capacities. For example, many of the ways prefigurative politics are practiced or discussed today is based on the lived experience of managerial, middle- and working-class white people in their twenties, who do not have children or care for elders, are able to make sacrifices and live on a low-budget and have devoted a significant amount of their lives to political work. I am not suggesting that efforts led by or primarily composed of such a demographic are problematic, or that these are the only people doing prefigurative politics.

We need to think expansively about the many ways prefigurative politics are practiced in different communities, by people with a wide range of life circumstances, and evaluate how we do prefigurative politics by the results more than just the stated intentions. While I agree that ends do not justify means, I also agree that means do not equate to ends. We need clarity of goals and purpose to drive our methods forward and help us think through what is both possible and effective. While there is the danger of prefigurative politics applying cookie-cutter solutions to the complex realities of life, there is also the potential of applying prefigurative objectives to a wide range of needs and goals that will produce different kinds of strategies, organizations, cultures, and communities that will help us achieve our overall visions of collective liberation.

At its best, prefigurative politics encourages us to place an ethic of love into our praxis as we expand liberation and undermine exploitation and oppression as much as we can through collective struggle. An approach that attempts to put step-by-step organizing into a material analysis of patriarchy, white supremacy, heterosexism, the gender binary system, capitalism, imperialism, and the state as systems that are continually reproduced politically, economically, culturally, and socially in the institutions and ideologies of our society. A collective liberation approach to organizing

strives to put our day-to-day work into a long-term perspective of revolutionary change guided by the vision of liberation for all people. Such a vision is constantly developing, as we learn the complexities of building towards such a vision through practice and reflection.

An acknowledgement, celebration, and respect for our humanity as complex people with a wide range of beauty, trauma, resilience, shortcomings, frailties, and power is of critical importance to this vision. Our vision of revolutionary change must embrace our humanity rather than hold out an idea of perfection that is neither possible or ultimately desirable. Prefigurative politics is fundamentally about creating visions, strategies, cultures, organizations, practices, and relationships that help us struggle against what we oppose, win and create what we are for, and grow individually and collectively stronger and healthier in the process.[21]

This is the anarchist tradition I look to as a source of strength and guidance for my values and vision. Anarchism, like other Left traditions, also has significant shortcomings, many of which will be explored in later chapters. However, powerful lessons come not only from successes and victories, but also from mistakes and losses. I am an anarchist who believes that a revitalized Left must draw from many traditions and actively create space for new theorizing and practice. I am an anarchist not because I am working to build an anarchist movement, but because I believe anarchism has critically important contributions to make to the larger process of revitalizing the overall Left and making revolutionary change in our society and world.

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1 My thinking on Left unity evolved from the need to come together for the sake of building a stronger movement to the need to come together to develop better politics and practice based on the best from our traditions and the lessons of our collective experiences. While my thinking on this has primarily evolved based in many of the organizing experiences explored throughout the book, there are a few people who played an important role in my thinking through our efforts in the San Francisco Bay Area to build Left unity in practice through Movement Generation and the Activist Study Circles. Hundreds of us participated in these efforts, but my conversations and work with Maria Poblet, Kali Akuno, Steve Williams, Mei-ying Williams, Malachi Garza, and Harmony Goldberg, in particular, have been critically important to my thinking.

2 In their groundbreaking book, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism,* Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt use the term "mass anarchism" to describe a similar understanding of anarchist politics and history as outlined in this essay. While *Black Flame* has been influential on my thinking and on this essay, I use the term "movement-based

anarchism" for the sake of continuity with the overall theme of movement building that runs throughout *Towards Collective Liberation.*

3 Other trends within anarchism, such as anarcho-individualism, argue that social change comes primarily through individual and small group change. Historically, this tradition has included some fierce women's liberationists, abolitionists against slavery, and defenders of civil liberties. However, the focus on individual change has often led to a rejection of social movements, organizing and solidarity in favor of personal autonomy. I believe that the best of anarchism combines the principles of autonomy and solidarity to develop a politics of social responsibility for collective liberation.

4 See Jason Adams, "Non-Western Anarchism: Rethinking the Global Context," http://libcom.org/library/non-western-anarchisms-rethinking-global-context.

5 Bakunin, like Marx, argued for a materialist understanding of society: in brief, that the economic conditions (i.e., the resources in society, the labor—paid and unpaid—of creating and acquiring resources, and the ownership/distribution/control of resources of society) have a significant influence on the overall politics and culture of society. For revolutionaries, this means that economic, or material, conditions enable or discourage revolutionary change in a given situation. For example, the social movements of the 1960s did not emerge because some people had the right ideas; they emerged because material conditions created new openings for those ideas to take root and gain momentum. This is not to suggest that material conditions alone create social movements; rather, movements are created from material conditions, emergent ideas and people acting on those ideas. Again turning to the movements of the 1960s, the work of previous generations for Black freedom, queer liberation, feminism, and socialism helped create the conditions for mass popular movements to emerge.

6 See *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin,* ed. G.P. Maximoff (New York: Free Press, 1964). For more by Peter Kropotkin see *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Essays.*

7 For the International Working People's Association and the Chicago anarchist movement see *The Haymarket Tragedy* by Paul Avrich and *The Haymarket Scrapbook,* ed. David Roediger and Franklin Rosemont. For more about Lucy Parsons, see http://www.lucyparsonsproject.org. For more about the Industrial Workers of the World, see http://www.iww.org/.

8 In this context, "bread" referred to the fight for improved living conditions, and "roses" referred to the fight for dignity and a better life.

9 For more on Goldman, see her *Anarchism and Other Essays* as well as her autobiography *Living My Life.* For more on Alexander Berkman, see his *Now and After: ABC of Communist Anarchism* and *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist.*

10 While organizing women, most of the leadership of the ILGWU up until that time had been men.

11 For an overview of anarchism in the United States from 1880—1930 see *Anarchist Portraits* by Paul Avrich. For an overview of Rose Pesotta's work see chapter 2 of *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* by Francesca Polletta and *The Gentle General: Rose Pesotta, Anarchist and Labor Organizer* by Elaine Leeder.

12 It is important to note that the abolitionist movement of the 1830s through the end of the Civil War was largely a Christian-based radical movement that worked for the overthrow of slavery and racial equality. In particular, the Garrisonian wing of the movement led by William Lloyd Garrison, Abby Kelley, Frederick Douglass, Angelina and Sarah Grimke, Sojourner Truth, and many others laid the foundation for future anti-racist, feminist, economic justice organizing in the country. For a powerful argument for why the Garrisonians, the abolitionist movement, and slave resistance of the same time period should be studied by anarchists, see Joel Olson's outstanding essay "Between Infoshops and Insurrection: U.S. Anarchism, Movement Building, and the Racial Order" in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies,* ed. Randall Amster et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009).

I agree with Olson that it is imperative that anarchists and the Left overall study this history for the lessons and insights it holds for our work today. Additionally, Henry David Thoreau, also an abolitionist and an early supporter of John Brown, made important contributions to the anarchist tradition through his civil disobedience to the U.S. war against Mexico and his essay "Resistance to Civil Government (Civil Disobedience)."

13 For an overview of this history of radical and anarchist pacifism, see *The Spirit of the Sixties: The Making of Postwar Radicalism* by James J. Farrell.

14 For a review of anarcha-feminist writings, see *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-Feminist Reader* (Oakland: AK Press/Dark Star, 2012).

15 For writings by social ecologists, see The Institute for Social Ecology's website, http://www.social-ecology.org. For more on alternative institutions in the 1970s see chapter 8 in *Spirit of the Sixties.*

16 For an overview of this period, see *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s* by Barbara Epstein. For writings by Starhawk on non-violent direct action, see *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising.*

17 For more on Jewish Anarchism, see chapter 13 in *Anarchist Portraits* by Paul Avrich.

18 Ervin's explicit call for and work towards the realization of a people of color anarchism played a major role in the growing network of APOC (Anarchist People of Color) in the 2000s. His leadership also brought a crucial anti-white supremacy analysis to mostly white sectors of the anarchist movement.

19 For an introduction to Love and Rage see *A New World in Our Hearts: Eight Years of Writing from the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation,* ed. Roy San Filippo (Oakland: AK Press, 2003).

20 The line "build the new world in the shell of the old" comes from the Preamble to the constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World. The section reads: "It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

21 For a general study of anarchism and prefigurative politics see *Gramsci Is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* by Richard J.F. Day. For a study of prefigurative politics and U.S. social movements, see *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* by Francesca Polletta. For studies based in specific prefigurative movements, see *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution* by Barbara Epstein; sections 2 and 3 of *Globalize Liberation: How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World*, ed. David Solnit; chapter 5 ("Ella Baker and the Origins of Participatory Democracy") in *Women and the Civil Rights Movement,* ed. by Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline A. Rouse, and Barbara Woods; and chapter 5 ("Dual Power in the Selva Lacondona") in *A New World in Our Hearts.*

FOOD NOT BOMBS AND THE BUILDING OF A GRASSROOTS ANARCHIST LEFT IN THE 1990S

When tens of thousands of people shut down the World Trade Organization's summit in Seattle 1999, many on the Left were shocked by the numbers, the creative tactics, the tenacity of the activists, and the anti-capitalist and anarchist politics that guided leading organizations like the Direct Action Network. For many of us involved, however, Seattle was an affirmation of our organizing work throughout the 1990s. It also pushed us to expand our sense of what was possible. For my affinity group of San Francisco Food Not Bombs members, Seattle was a powerful escalation of the movement we were part of and working to build: an anti-authoritarian/anarchist non-violent movement, based on direct action strategies working for economic and social justice.[1]

This essay focuses on the development of Food Not Bombs (FNB) in the United States and in particular the development of San Francisco FNB, which played a leading role in the larger FNB movement. Food Not Bombs was one of a dozen national networks of locally based groups working on a range of social justice and environmental issues from an anarchist/anti-authoritarian politics. These groups were based in anti-capitalist Left analysis with an emphasis on direct action and participatory democracy, and had a mostly young, largely white grassroots volunteer base in working-class and middle-class communities in cities, towns, suburbs, and rural areas throughout the country. These networks brought tens of thousands of people into social movements during the 1990s and have had far-reaching influences on the politics and practice of the current activist Left.

The purpose of this essay is to develop a deeper understanding of the activist anarchist Left movement in the 1990s through a study of FNB as one of the key groups that both revitalized the anarchist Left and represented many of its strengths and weaknesses. My goal is to help contemporary activists and organizers draw lessons from the recent past to be more

effective in our overall efforts to build movement and power for collective liberation. As will become clear in this study, it isn't just that current activism has been heavily influenced by the activism of the recent past, but that the same questions, challenges, mistakes, and lessons that many young activists face today are very similar to those faced in the 1990s. This essay, and this book, are written from one activist to another, fueled by the belief that when our efforts are rooted in history, we are much better prepared to make history guided by vision, possibility, and wisdom. FNB, because of its scale and influence, is an important source of lessons for our work today.

Internationally, there have been over a thousand FNB chapters, primarily in the United States, Canada, and Europe, but also in Asia, Africa, Australia, South and Central America, and Mexico. Over fifty thousand people have worked with FNB since it was founded in 1980. However, very little analysis has been written about FNB and its role. While I am not attempting a comprehensive history, I intend to develop analysis from my experience in FNB and share lessons from the work. Though this essay is written primarily in the past tense as it focuses on FNB's development in 1980 and its work in the 1990s, it is important to note that hundreds of FNB groups around the world continue their work.[2]

The first section of this essay covers the period from 1980 to 1995. It traces the development of Food Not Bombs in the 1980s, examining the political context of the Reagan administration and the growing war against the working class and communities of color. It then focuses on how SF FNB joined in the local struggle for economic justice and helped build the broader international FNB movement. The second section explores lessons from SF FNB's internal work to build an accountable and democratic organization committed to anarchist and feminist practice. The third and final section reviews SF FNB's external work and draws out lessons from our experience. This section looks at both our day-today work and our broader movement work. It explores key internal debates and conflicts we went through, how they influenced our work, and lessons from those experiences for organizing today.

Based primarily on my own experience as an organizer in SF FNB, the insights here are nevertheless shaped by thousands of activists in and around the FNB movement: while I am ultimately responsible for writing this essay,

I do so knowing that my analysis comes out of collective work, reflection, and theorizing. While there are many lessons here about what *not* to do, I have emerged from SF FNB with a deep sense of love, community, resistance, and belief in possibilities that nourish and inspire me. I write this summation of my experiences and reflections from this place of love for what we built together.

Anti-War Activism, Economic Justice, and the Development of the Food Not Bombs Movement, 1980–1995

Started by eight anti-nuclear activists engaged in the campaign to close the New Hampshire-based Seabrook nuclear power plant in the late 1970s, Food Not Bombs emerged from a campaign involved over thirty thousand people and was based on affinity groups coordinated through spokescouncils using consensus decision-making to plan large-scale non-violent civil disobedience. The political strategies, culture, and tactics of this anti-nuke movement were influenced by anarchism, the civil rights movement, faith-based activism (from Quakers to Pagans) and indigenous land struggles. Ultimately, these aspects of the anti-nuke movement directly influenced social justice movements through the 1990s and FNB in particular.[34]

The original eight activists initiated FNB to make connections between militarism and poverty and to provide direct services while raising political consciousness. The group decided to serve food in an area in which homeless people already congregated, but also somewhere highly visible in order to draw attention from the public. The goals were to bring higher levels of visibility to poverty, agitate against militarism, and promote upcoming peace and social justice protests. The combination of free food and radical politics proved to be an effective way to spread important information in the community and mobilize people.

The first FNB group developed three core principles that became the foundation for FNB politics as new chapters adopted them as their own. They came to be defined as follows:

1. Consensus: FNB groups practice consensus decision-making and strive for a culture of empowerment for all members. Consensus operates through group discussion of proposals, clarification through questions, and efforts to address concerns by modifying proposals. Consensus helps develop methods of social cooperation and egalitarianism in our decision-making process.[4]
2. Non-violence: FNB is committed to the philosophy of non-violence. Non-violence is a political strategy of working to prefigure the society you are working for while opposing the injustice of the current system. FNB groups believe that we must actively work to challenge racism, sexism, the class system, and authoritarianism if we are to end poverty and remove violence from our daily lives. In practice, this means taking on struggles in our communities to address these issues, working to challenge inequality within our organizations, and embracing a commitment to non-violent direct action in our tactics.
3. Vegetarianism: FNB is committed to ecological sustainability through sharing vegetarian food. With this in mind, however, there is a diversity of opinion within the movement regarding eating meat in general. Politically, many believe that killing animals for human consumption is ethically wrong. Others believe that the primary issue is the environmental destruction and cruelty of factory farming. FNB groups strive to prepare meals that are healthy and use organic ingredients.

Through the 1980s, FNB focused on providing free community meals to poor and working-class people and building the anti-war movement. FNB was part of Pledge of Resistance, a broad-based coalition united to take direct action in the event of U.S. military intervention in Central America. By 1987, over one hundred thousand people in over four hundred action groups around the country signed the civil disobedience pledge. FNB activists converged at the Nevada Test Site to provide food for the ongoing peace camp protesting nuclear weapons testing. The peace camp brought together Western Shoshone indigenous activists and mostly white anti-war activists to demand the return of Western Shoshone land and an end to nuclear weapons testing. At the peace camp, FNB built relationships with people from around the country involved in local peace efforts.

In 1987, Keith McHenry, one of the original Boston FNB activists, moved to San Francisco. A white working-class organizer in his early thirties, Keith immediately went to work building an FNB chapter. As Boston FNB worked to oppose the Reagan administration's covert wars against the Left in El Salvador and Nicaragua, San Francisco FNB took on Reagan's economic policies at home.

Ronald Reagan and the War on the Poor, 1980–1988

After nearly two decades of Left forces pushing forward a social justice agenda, a right-wing backlash brought Ronald Reagan into office in 1980. The Reagan administration implemented policies to break unions, lower wages, cut support to social service programs, health care, and education, and transfer public resources to the rich through enormous tax cuts. At the federal level, public services were slashed as military, prison, and police budgets grew. Reagan's efforts to dismantle social programs—material gains of social movements of the preceding century—translated into budget cuts at the level of municipal governments.

The development and sustained growth of homelessness was one of the most visible results of these policies in urban areas. While my own generation was raised in the era of mass homelessness, many in the United States had not witnessed such extreme economic disparity since the Great Depression. Meanwhile, state-run community revitalization programs that survived were not focused on assisting poor and working-class people to become homeowners, as they had in the post-war 1950s by providing low-interest loans to primarily build "white only" suburbs. Instead, affordable housing programs, now serving a multiracial working class, were shrinking. During the 1970s, federally subsidized housing added 160,000 units a year of available rental housing around the country for low-income people, with many units earmarked for elderly people.

In 1980, the number of new subsidized housing units was down to 20,900. By Reagan's last year in office in 1988, that number was down to 9,700. During that time, the total number of existing public housing units also shrank as demolitions, closures, and conversions eliminated affordable housing. By 1984, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) found that twenty-three million households had substandard

housing or paid too much for shelter relative to their income. Furthermore, 83 percent of poor people were unserved by subsidized housing programs. Among families with less than 10 percent of the national median income, 94 percent were left out of the subsidized housing programs set up supposedly to help them.[5] "Reaganomics" was accelerating the policies we now call neoliberalism and the social consequences were dire.

Food Not Bombs and Class Struggle on the Streets of San Francisco, 1988–1995

San Francisco FNB started distributing food and anti-war literature in Golden Gate Park in the Haight-Ashbury District. The highly visible servings drew the attention of the conservative neighborhood association that was working hard to get homeless people out of the area. The association put pressure on Mayor Art Agnos, and in August of 1988 two waves of FNB volunteers were arrested for serving food without a permit. The progressive community, with the Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood Council providing leadership, responded to the arrests with outrage. On Labor Day weekend, over three hundred supporters and volunteers marched down Haight Street to the park and set up a line of at least thirty people who shared food. Although fifty-four people were arrested, images of police confiscating food from homeless people captured media attention and generated stronger support for FNB throughout the city. Four days later, after two meetings with community members, FNB, the ACLU, and city officials, the mayor gave FNB a permit to serve food.

In the fall of 1989, nearly a year after the struggle in Golden Gate Park, Civic Center became the focal point of attacks on San Francisco's homeless population. With police writing citations for "camping violations" in the city's parks, homeless people created a tent city, dubbed "Camp Agnos," across from city hall in Civic Center to protest the miserable conditions on the streets. Members of the homeless community asked FNB to support them and the group agreed to gather food and run a twenty-four-hour kitchen. Hundreds of people converged in Civic Center, and the new FNB field kitchen became a hub for poor and working-class people to plan next steps over hot food and coffee. The Coalition on Homelessness (the

Coalition) organized press conferences and demanded that the city fund affordable housing.[6] City hall moved quickly to open a new homeless shelter and then issued an order that anyone still at Camp Agnos would be arrested. However, families, women, and people with pets were not allowed to stay at the new shelter. Consequently, many people stayed with the tent city to continue protesting for solutions put forward by the Coalition. In response, Mayor Agnos moved to end the tent city, securing a court injunction banning FNB from sharing free food in any public space in San Francisco. Police arrested FNB and confiscated the field kitchen and food. Although Camp Agnos was dismantled, the crisis of homelessness and a failed response from the mayor became a defining political issue in city politics.

FNB continued serving lunches and dinners every day in Civic Center and the arrests continued at each serving for several weeks. Then on October 5, 1989, the largest earthquake since 1906 hit the Bay Area. Gas and electricity service was knocked out. FNB set up a twenty-four-hour field kitchen and gave out hot food to thousands, including the police. Public attention and community support for FNB reached a new high. FNB and our allies leveraged the support to force Mayor Agnos to end the arrests. However, the court injunction remained. During these negotiations, city officials frequently said that FNB needed to make a choice between serving food and political organizing. They tried to deny permits for setting up a literature table and serving food at the same time. But combining services and radical politics was at the heart of FNB strategy. The efforts by city officials to divide politics and services through the permit process often confused supporters. Some thought FNB should just accept whatever compromise they could get to allow them to share free food with homeless people. However, FNB and most close allies knew that this was a fight not for charitable services, but a fight to support and build an economic justice movement. Eventually, FNB won that round of negotiations.

FNB went on to serve lunch and share political information every weekday and dinner every night in Civic Center. The experience of the tent city helped root FNB in the homeless community, built relationships with the Coalition, and brought more poor and working-class people into the group. At the same time, the public debate on homelessness was moving away from affordable housing and government responsibility for services

and focused more and more on policing the personal behavior of homeless people. Further, the image of poverty and homeless focused on violent, drunk single men, rather than women, children, and families who are the majority of people living in poverty and on the streets.

The Matrix Program and Poor People's Organized Resistance

In 1992, mayors in New York City and San Francisco were elected on "law and order" platforms by pledging to get tough on crime and homeless people. San Francisco's mayor, Frank Jordan, began the crackdown on what came to be called "quality of life" crimes. These were "crimes" associated with homelessness such as sleeping in public spaces, urinating in public, being drunk in public, loitering, and obstructing sidewalks by panhandling or sleeping. Jordan's new "get tough" policies, named the Matrix program, were designed to criminalize poor people on the streets and push people out of neighborhoods, Civic Center, and other public places, and either into jail or out of the city entirely. Backed primarily by the hotel, restaurant, and tourist industries, this program made the new "quality of life" crimes a priority for the police.[7] The police also became the distributors of the vouchers homeless people needed to access the shelters. The implicit goal was to make poverty a criminal justice issue to be addressed by the police, rather than an economic justice issue to be addressed by services and affordable housing.

The Coalition on Homelessness and FNB immediately challenged the Jordan administration on the Matrix program. The Coalition continued to organize poor and homeless people and to pressure city hall to reinstate social services, decriminalize homeless people, and build affordable housing. They were a consistent counterpoint to Jordan in the media as they struggled to connect poverty to structural realities in the face of the widespread dehumanization of homeless people as criminals personally responsible for poverty. The Coalition and FNB joined with the San Francisco Tenants Union to form a new group called Homes Not Jails (HNJ) in 1992. HNJ was an activist squatter group with a majority made up of working-class and poor people and included homeless leadership.

The group pursued a two-part strategy: quietly taking over abandoned buildings to provide much-needed housing, called "survival squats," while

also engaging in high-profile actions to draw attention to big landlords leaving apartment buildings empty. FNB, HNJ and the Coalition worked closely together. FNBers who were also members of HNJ regularly recruited small groups after FNB meetings to go open housing for homeless people. At FNB community meals, HNJ members invited homeless people to their meetings and let people know about open survival squats they could stay in. The Coalition ran articles about HNJ's organizing in their monthly newspaper *Street Sheet,* sold by homeless people throughout the city to raise money for their personal survival.

Under Matrix, the court injunction against FNB was enforced and police were ordered to arrest volunteers who served food across from city hall. On September 2, 1993, the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) arrested fifteen FNB volunteers and charged some with "felony conspiracy to commit a misdemeanor," which allowed the city to hold the activists in jail for up to three days, which increased the level of punishment to those who opposed the mayor's program, and was meant to intimidate and prevent others from getting involved.

In the following months, police routinely arrested FNB members and people eating at the servings. In addition to hundreds of arrests, over a dozen FNB vehicles were seized, literature, tables and FNB signs were confiscated, and food was either thrown away or taken away as "evidence." In response, FNBers, including James Tracy, a future Coalition staff leader, developed a solidarity campaign to connect SF FNB to the larger social justice movement. The plan was to get volunteers from other organizations to bring out their banners, make statements to invited journalists, serve meals, and risk arrest. Members of the Gray Panthers, HERE Local 2850, the Black Trade Unionist Association, the Industrial Workers of the World, and the religious community all came out.

Pictures in the media of Catholic priests handcuffed for sharing food with poor people dramatized the situation and garnered more public support. Not too surprisingly, when members of the National Lawyers Guild served, the police chose not to arrest them. The solidarity campaign helped develop personal and organizational relationships between FNB and the larger Bay Area movement of unions, social justice groups, and the Left faith community. Through their exposure to the growing homeless community,

many of these organizations and community members became engaged in the fight for housing and civil rights for poor people.

Additionally, FNB volunteers and poor people at community meals learned about dozens of different organizations. FNB's ability to share free food in public spaces with homeless people became one of the most visible struggles in the city for economic justice and defending FNB became a cause of the Bay Area social justice movement. The relationships built through the solidarity campaign not only expanded FNB's base of support, it helped build a broader movement in the Bay Area for working-class power and economic justice, with the agenda of poor people at the center.

Working-Class and Poor People's Leadership in San Francisco Food Not Bombs

Throughout the 1990s, SF FNB was a mixed-class group with significant working-class leadership, as defined by the roles and tasks people took on, rather than formal titles and positions people held.[8]

There was a political commitment to equality in the group, which at that time expressed itself as an insistence that there were no leaders, as the concept of a "leader" generally carried a negative connotation as someone controlling and dominating others. To many of us, "leaders" were people at the head of the state and of corporate America—people destroying the planet and inflicting misery on millions to gain power and wealth. Furthermore, many of us opposed the tradition of authoritarian socialism, represented by the legacy of Lenin and Stalin, and so Left leadership was associated with dictatorship. Most of us thus rejected the very concept of leadership as an inherently authoritarian obstacle to democracy and justice.

I use the term "leadership" as a neutral concept to describe someone's role. Rather than seeing leadership in and of itself as a problem, I care about what leaders are doing to further the goals of the larger political project and, in particular, how they support other people's leadership. My understanding of leadership is heavily influenced by civil rights organizer Ella Baker, who referred to a leader as someone committed to developing other leaders to build a grassroots-led movement for social justice. I believe this understanding of leadership was at the heart of FNB politics, though there

were many expressions of FNB politics that ran counter to this understanding of leadership.[9]

When I discuss leadership in SF FNB in the context of this article, I am referring to leadership in day-to-day decision-making; meeting facilitation; note-taking; proposal development; interactions with new people; running a cookhouse; keeping track of what was happening at city hall and what our allies at the Coalition and HNJ were doing; maintenance of group vehicles; literature writing and political development; media work; attending to legal issues from past arrests; financial management; fundraising; and recruitment of people to take on dozens of different roles. I'm also referring to leadership roles in the external work, such as setting up meals, planning and creating events and actions, media work; participating in coalitions, writing articles for the alternative press, interacting with supporters, potential new volunteers, community allies, and activist and corporate media, along with police and government officials. There are also leadership roles, although much less visible and harder to name, involved in developing FNB's politics and strategy, along with the group's culture. The most basic and fundamental concern of leadership, generally speaking, was ensuring the success of the group's operations and encouraging future growth to accomplish our goals.

In addition to meetings, the internal life of the group revolved around cookhouses. In the early years, FNB served meals twelve times a week, necessitating at least ten cookhouses, usually located at someone's home. Leadership involved the people who ran those cookhouses and made sure that the donations of food were secure, the kitchen was ready to go, volunteers were welcomed, the work was distributed, and the meal got prepared. Cookhouses were the primary way that most people related to the group. There were many that never or rarely came to meetings, so information about the overall group was shared at cookhouses to help build a collective identity. Cookhouses were also one of the main ways new people came into the group. A few people who played leadership roles in SF FNB are worth mentioning in detail to give a sense of the group at the time. (Some names have been changed for reasons of privacy.)

Angela Rain

Angela was a white woman in her early twenties who "did FNB" three to five times a week. She taught new drivers how to collect food donations from health food stores, organic produce warehouses, and bagel shops. Angela moved between Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels, squats, a van, and couch-surfing at other FNBers' houses. She did workfare jobs and received General Assistance (welfare). She was a key bridge person between FNB and HNJ; after FNB meetings she often recruited and led small teams of people to open up survival squats. She had a regular radio program on the local micro-powered radio station, Radio Libre, and taught many new people how to coordinate volunteers by calling the hundred-plus FNB phone list to make sure all twelve cookhouses had cooks and a driver. She was the one who helped me talk through the political and emotional experience of my first FNB arrest, which included police intimidation and a day in jail, helping me connect my experience to the realities of homeless and poor people and a larger vision of economic justice.

Brian Wickenheiser

Shortly after moving to San Francisco from the gay community in Chicago, Brian Wickenheiser joined SF FNB when he saw police taking food away from poor people. Brian's experience in Chicago during extensive police raids of working-class gay bars gave him a valuable and unique perspective on state power and how working-class and oppressed people build counterculture and political power. He brought his experiences as a white working-class gay man to the group, as well as a class-based queer liberation analysis into FNB's economic justice politics. He talked about the connections between capitalism, state violence, and homophobia to help volunteers understand why so many queer, HIV-positive, and transsexual/transgender people were homeless and coming to FNB meals, and how this analysis could translate into respect and solidarity. He brought his skills as a trained chef and experienced caterer to planning and coordinating large meals for protests and community events. As the group's unofficial archivist who kept detailed notes, he helped us build some level of institutional memory about decisions and processes. Brian consistently helped new people feel included and prioritized creating a sustaining community and culture through music and gardening. As he and I worked

side by side on dozens of FNB projects, Brian encouraged me to be humble as an organizer and love the people we work with even when it's hard. He demonstrated this in his actions and modeled this loving practice for many of us.

Tai Miller

Tai Miller came to San Francisco after years of working with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and FNB in Santa Cruz. She coordinated FNB cookhouses and took on the role of helping new volunteers learn the politics and history of FNB. She often brought her white working-class experience and IWW anarchist politics into conversations about current events as a way of developing new volunteers' analysis and solidarity work. She encouraged and often led FNB efforts to bring food to union picket lines of striking workers, a practice that became a regular FNB activity under the name "Food Not Bosses." She started an FNB garden plot in a Mission District community garden to grow herbs for the meals. Tai and I lived and worked together at the Praxis House collective. Through sharing history, labor songs, and stories, she helped many of us see ourselves as a community carrying on a long tradition of resistance and encouraged me to honor the work we do, even when there is so much more to be done. Later on, Tai began working at the worker-owned-and-run Rainbow Grocery Cooperative, which was a major source of FNB donations.

Diamond Dave Whitaker

Diamond Dave came to San Francisco as a teenager from his Jewish neighborhood in Minnesota in the 1950s to join the Beat poetry movement. He was always on the radical Left, from the '60s in the Haight-Ashbury to the explosion of punk rock in the '80s. A living legend, Diamond Dave introduced a young Bob Dylan to Woody Guthrie and marijuana, and worked with the Diggers and a dozens of other grassroots radical groups over the years. A voracious reader, he regularly emceed poetry readings and punk shows, and DJed on community and pirate radio stations, always combining politics and poetry. Joining FNB in the late '80s, he served meals all over the city; older homeless hippies, run-away queer youth, or activists of all backgrounds all knew Diamond Dave. He had been homeless and in

and out of poverty over the years, and welcomed people at FNB meals with a warm smile and one of his poems. Whether it was recruiting students on the bus to join FNB or lining up bands to play a benefit for the group, Diamond Dave used his humor, political savvy, and charm to build FNB as a group and a community.

Franklin Devore

A retired bus driver, Franklin Devore was consistently at cookhouses, meetings, events, and protests throughout the 1990s. He brought memory and history to cookhouse discussions of politics as he shared stories, particularly about coming into anarchism and radical labor politics in the 1960s through an older queer IWW organizer who had been imprisoned under anti-anarchist (criminal syndicalism) laws in the 1920s. As one of a group of white, working-class, gay men who revived the IWW in the Bay Area, Franklin often helped new volunteers get oriented to the work of FNB, which he described as a continuation of labor history, of working-class people fighting for equality. He told stories from the history of anarchist organizing and the IWW during the early 1900s as well as his own story of coming out as gay in his union in the 1970s and how he overcame fear and isolation.

There were also many more poor and homeless people who played important roles, but never came to meetings or cookhouses. Some were FNB members who regularly served, while others would not have considered themselves FNBers per se, but took leading roles in the showdown with the mayor's office and the police department. During times when a lone FNB server would be approached by the police and told, "If you don't stop serving food, we will arrest you," homeless people from the line would often step forward and begin serving as well. Many times, homeless people stood between the serving and the police, chanting "Food Not Bombs, Homes Not Jails," while others quickly collected their meals. One of the most active of them was RJ.

RJ

RJ was a poor Black woman who regularly served meals and galvanized resistance through powerful speeches when the police came to make arrests.

Wearing a black jacket with the words "The Truth is a Dangerous Explosive" written in big letters on the back, RJ called on the hundreds of people walking around Civic Center at lunchtime to witness what was happening: "This is the mayor's solution to homelessness. While people starve on the streets of this country, while people die sleeping on the streets of this country, we are denied food, we are locked up for trying to survive in the United States of America. They don't mind if we die, but they mind if we eat. Wake up, America! Wake up to what is done in the name of democracy!" Her speeches drew attention and brought people over to see what was happening. She also inspired other homeless people to stand up to the police and often gave courage to arrested FNBers who were waiting in handcuffs. She was sometimes arrested giving these speeches and once was charged for "attempting to incite a riot" because she yelled out to a large crowd to "join us" as she was dragged to a police van. RJ was one of the many poor and homeless people whose fierce leadership was vital to the success of FNB to not only survive, but to thrive during the difficult times of the Matrix program.

The class character of SF FNB reflected the mostly white working-class and poor membership and constituency of the Coalition, HNJ, and the Tenants Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Working-class and poor people of color played key roles in FNB and led many economic justice struggles at this time in the broader movement in the Bay Area, but the sector of the movement that included SF FNB was majority-white. White working-class leadership was also key in organizations like the IWW and the Eviction Defense Network, both close allies of FNB. A large number of middle-class people, like myself, also got involved in these efforts, with many of us playing leadership roles.

The Class Politics of San Francisco Food Not Bombs

The class politics of SF FNB were decidedly anti-capitalist and socialist-leaning. There was a shared analysis that capitalism fueled both poverty and war within the borders of the United States and around the world. We believed that an economic system that prioritizes profit over humanity would lead to starvation, homelessness, and mass exclusion from health care. We understood our works as on the side of poor people against the

ruling class—those who own the corporations and control the state. We believed that working-class and middle-class people needed to join in the struggle with poor and homeless people because: a) homelessness is an economic and moral crisis and those who are homeless are in the most need of immediate solidarity; b) homeless people and poor people are the leading force currently fighting for economic justice; and c) the demands of housing and food for all can unite a broad cross-section of people for both immediate reforms and systemic change. These politics informed a lot of the assumptions from which we operated, but allowed for a wide range of perspectives within the group. While we were united as anti-capitalists, however, we had very few discussions about what capitalism actually is, how it operates, and how to move beyond slogans like "people before profit" to discussions of large-scale alternatives.

As a group, we lacked both a developed class analysis as well as the methods to develop such an analysis, inhibiting our ability to move beyond our personal politics and experiences. This also impacted our ability to think about where power comes from in society, who has what kinds of power, and what that means for strategic action to challenge and change existing power relationships.

Working-class experience shaped our work and how we approached it, but our lack of shared analysis often led to tensions in the group around class as we personalized larger structural issues. Without a shared language based in a common understanding of capitalism, we had a hard time talking about the unequal distribution of resources among members of the group. A common example of this was when college-educated activists acted as though everyone had been to college, or middle-class activists behaved as through everyone had access to resources to help them fulfill their FNB responsibilities. Frequently, poor and working-class members critiqued this behavior as arrogant and elitist. These dynamics often played themselves out as personality conflicts, and individuals were frequently left on their own to either seek resolution or ignore each other. One result of this was that class differences often led to class antagonism, as middle-class people could often take on more responsibilities and leadership due to both political commitment and access to steady income and housing, college education/training, cars, computers, and cultural capital. This was not universal, but it did lead to tension in the group for longtime working-class

and poor volunteers who frequently experienced their own leadership as overlooked and marginalized.

While this dynamic played out frequently in the group, there were also strategies utilized for sharing resources, usually generated by working-class and poor people. This included: purchase or donation of cars for FNB work; shared bicycles and bike trailers to transport food; making individual computers available to multiple members; group voice-mail system everyone could use for FNB work; lending libraries of books and tools; living rooms turned into short-term housing; and fundraising parties for particular personal needs of FNBers.

The class-consciousness of working-class and poor people in the group was very mixed. Many were clear about their class experiences, and framed their politics as rooted in a working-class position. They often talked about FNB as a way to give back to others in their community. Some who came from working class and lower-middle-class backgrounds had a hard time understanding their class position. Most of us struggled to work through the class confusion prevalent in the United States: that everyone is middle-class. Since we were working with homeless people, being a renter and having a roof over one's head sometimes led working-class people to identify as middle-class. There were also middle-class people who had a vague sense of being middle-class without a framework to understand the historic process of class formation in the United States. Some who came from a variety of class backgrounds and had a deeper understanding of capitalism from both their own experience and political study helped many of us put our experience into a systemic Left, radical, anti-capitalist framework. The FNB cookhouse was often the location for sharing stories about our lives. Through storytelling about our families, neighborhoods, and upbringings, we helped each other understand our own experiences in a new way. Class, gender, sexuality, and race were central to our stories and conversations, frequently taking the form of consciousness raising as we reflected deeper meaning back to one another. To the soundtrack of knives chopping vegetables on cutting boards, we helped each other develop analysis out of our experiences.

The group's class analysis benefited from the influence of mostly working-class volunteers who were also members of the IWW and who located FNB in a framework of class struggle. Still, the culture of FNB did

not promote group-wide political education, and we did not have a grounded sense of vision and strategy. This was a roadblock to the group developing a shared class analysis to guide our work.

Three Strategic Directions for San Francisco Food Not Bombs

In the first half of the 1990s, SF FNB had three discernable strategic directions. Most of us operated from a combination of two or of all three. I separate them out here because they were each informed by different strategic priorities, class experiences, and analyses, and variously conflicted and complemented each other.

1. **Survival Program":** This position stated that homeless people needed survival programs to help provide for basic needs, and groups like FNB, and HNJ could help create that infrastructure. This orientation prioritized support for other groups like the Coalition on Homelessness, the Tenants Union, Eviction Defense Network, and Mission Agenda which were all organizing proactive campaigns for affordable housing and economic justice. At this time, many volunteers in FNB also worked with these groups.

   In addition to direct services, these survival programs would take direct action on issues of food, housing, and civil rights to help define the struggle and increase its militancy. This included FNB serving food at both community meals and at social/economic justice actions around the city and HNJ opening squats for longer-term housing and in public takeovers. The Coalition provided legal support to people ticketed for sleeping in parks and sidewalks and also took action to change city policy criminalizing poor people. The survival program understanding of FNB focused primarily on increasing the capacity of poor and working-class people, so we/they could take action in an economic justice movement to fight for immediate needs and systemic change.

2. **"Confrontation to Create a Values Crisis":** This position rested, in large part, on the assumption that we needed people from broad sectors of society to join us in a movement to dismantle the military-

industrial complex, redirect resources to social programs, and change the values that shape our society. We believed that sharing free food across the street from city hall while the police continually arrested people would dramatize the conflicting values of society and seed a larger crisis. The idea, in other words, was to create a conflict that would force people to choose sides. By serving in highly public places and holding an uncompromising position in the face of pressure from city hall, FNB would create a dramatic public dilemma for the state: either they would let us continue to serve, which would be a victory for us, or they would arrest us, which would galvanize support and expose the moral bankruptcy of an economy that puts profits before people.

From this position, getting food to people was critical, but confrontation with the agenda of the business elites calling the shots at city hall was understood as central to mobilizing the broader public for economic justice. We thought that everyday people would be horrified seeing people being beaten and arrested for sharing free food and this would highlight the injustice of the current economy, and bring needed public pressure to win economic justice reforms and systemic change.

3. **"Help Build the Movement":** This was the position that emphasized the important role FNB played in helping to revitalize a radical, grassroots, activist-oriented anti-authoritarian Left around the United States and internationally. The idea was that the broad political principles of FNB could bring in people who would then develop a more comprehensive analysis by taking on economic justice issues in their local communities.

   Additionally, FNB's emphasis on serving at protests and actions on other issues would help people connect with and support other groups and issues. In turn, this would help revitalize radical activist communities in small towns, suburbs, and cities all across the country. The role of SF FNB, from this position, was to: a) help provide as many resources as possible to the growing network of FNB chapters; b) call for gatherings to bring people together to share experiences, skills, and lessons; c) play a coordinator role in the expanding FNB movement by facilitating communication, tracking groups and maintaining a public contact list, lifting up struggles in other areas of the country and world

in solidarity; and d) help mobilize solidarity for other FNB groups facing arrest and political repression for sharing free food.

The first position on SF FNB as "survival program" was held mostly by poor and working-class activists in FNB and they played leading roles in that work. The second position on SF FNB as "confrontation to create values crisis" was held mainly by those with relatively more financial stability. While those worst-off were on the frontlines, middle-class members with greater access to resources could afford to risk arrests regularly. The third position, that FNB should orient towards "building the movement," was also held mostly (but not only) by those who were relatively better-off. While middle-class activists generally had more resources for the travel and national communication that helped facilitate this work, working-class members played leading roles in this work as well, and FNB found ways to collectively create resources to support them. However, the class character of these orientations to FNB was about more than who advocated for what: it was also about who was at the center of the strategy.

The "survival program" orientation placed poor and working-class people at the center of the strategy. Through an economic justice movement based in and led by that segment of society, reforms could be won to improve the immediate situation. Through reform fights and a struggle to redefine the public debate on poverty, those most affected by economic inequality would build power to work for structural reforms to win larger-scale change. Meanwhile, the "confrontation to create a values crisis" orientation looked primarily to the general public (the working and middle-class majority) to step in and make change behind the leadership of the existing economic justice movement. This often meant we put middle-class liberals at the center of the strategy: confrontation led by poor and working-class people would shock the middle class into action.

Finally, the "help build the movement" orientation was focused on bringing in people, broadly speaking, to the movement. In practice, this focused mostly on working- and middle-class students and young people, who were then at the center of the strategy. With FNB as an entry point, this influx of new people would help rebuild a progressive Left social and economic justice movement to end war and hunger.

All three of these strategic orientations placed poor and working class-led organizations at the center of their strategy. However, "build the movement" was much more vague, particularly outside the context of an existing working class-led economic justice movement in your local area, about both long term strategy and leadership. The differences between them never provoked a major crisis in SF FNB, but they did lead to different perspectives about the goals and purpose of the group. The "survival programs" and "confrontation" orientations held sway side by side during the Matrix program years. Post-Matrix, the "help build the movement," along with a mix of the other two, became central.

Building a Culture of Resistance and Internal Contradictions

As the arrests of SF FNBers mounted during the struggle against the Matrix program, the confrontations seemed to grow more militant. Many rallies took place at the County Jail and courthouse, where FNBers, usually Keith McHenry, were to appear in court. Cops in riot gear surrounded the area. After years of going to demonstrations, my first SF FNB protest caught me off guard as people cursed and screamed at police at close range. Many had been arrested before for being homeless, for serving with FNB, or both. The anger was a response to the brutality of the police, which many had experienced in alleys, in jail, and other places away from the public eye. They were denied sleep, denied food, beaten by cops, and maligned by the mayor and the corporate media as if the worst thing about poverty was the fact that middle-class people were being subjected to panhandling. These protests brought people together to collectively demand an end to the violence.

When arresting FNBers, the police regularly used so-called pain compliance torture techniques which included: pushing thumbs into the soft spot between the jaw and ears or between the jaw and neck; twisting arms and wrists; choking; and stepping on backs, legs, and arms. Intimidation tactics were also common, including arresting queer volunteers, driving them around for hours, and making homophobic comments and threats about dropping them cuffed into the San Francisco Bay where their bodies would never be found, and no one would care. Queer and working-class members of the group were especially targeted for the most verbal and

physical abuse. Middle-class volunteers and college students were often threatened with permanent arrest records and told lies about how FNB leaders, specifically Keith McHenry, were using them to get rich. I, for example, was told on multiple occasions that I was being used to get arrested, to generate media attention and to bring in donations that Keith would funnel into dozens of personal bank accounts. Police documents, obtained during this time by the National Lawyers Guild, revealed that undercover officers had attended FNB meetings and called FNB leaders pretending to be interested volunteers to solicit information.[10]

But Food Not Bombs kept going. Volunteers engaged in non-violent civil disobedience by refusing to let go of buckets of soup and ladles. Once we were put in police vans, we would rock them back and forth chanting "Food Not Bombs, Homes Not Jails," along with people on the outside. At one serving, a longtime FNBer started chanting, "Fuck you, we're Food Not Bombs." Soon thereafter T-shirts were made with the fist and the carrot and "Fuck You, We're Food Not Bombs" printed on the front. People wore the shirts to servings and developed an attitude that the group would not be intimidated or stopped. Food Not Bombs was written on and carved into benches in jail, which helped to maintain FNBers' spirits and many of the other people in jail often thanked FNBers for continuing to serve food (which many of them ate). All of this helped create a dynamic momentum of a large "us" versus a small "them." But there were also fault lines among the "us" that could divide us. In times of crisis and frustration, internal contradictions often come to the surface in groups, and SF FNB was no different. The three cops arresting FNB members on a day-to-day basis were two African American men and one white woman. People who had been threatened and sometimes beaten up by these cops yelled highly problematic jeers. White people, some homeless, some middle-class, would shout at the Black cops, "What if this was Alabama? What if this was Woolworth's?"[11] Most in FNB frowned upon this, but the group didn't develop a collective understanding of why this was a problem. This "uncomfortable" dynamic of white activists yelling at Black cops was an ongoing issue. It hit the nerve of major underlying racial tensions and, for this reason, is worth discussing in detail below.

White people in a white supremacist society have an understanding of race shaped by white supremacy. By white supremacy, I mean the psychological impact of white superiority, and the political and economic aspects of white privilege that white people experience. Furthermore, many white activists can have a one-dimensional approach to racism. Many believe that "racism is bad, let's put it behind us." As a result, we in FNB rarely examined the material and psychological benefits of whiteness and, thus, race seemed like an issue of color and identity rather than history and power. White activists who generally had little to no relationship to racial justice struggles were calling Black police traitors to communities of color. The changing relationship of how power is organized in the post-civil rights era is complex, but we have a responsibility as activists and organizers to take it on.[12]

The spectacle of white activists in a crowd of white people yelling at Black cops about the civil rights movement underlined the lack of race analysis in FNB. Indeed, FNB had little analysis of white supremacy and during this time had few articulated anti-racist politics at all. I believe, as many did at the time, that sending Black cops to regularly arrest FNB was a strategic move on the part of the police department to exacerbate racial tensions in and around FNB. This became more effective as the racial comments intensified. At one serving, when a Black cop threw yet another poor person against a car, a white FNBer yelled,"You're the mayor's boy," followed by, "You're the mayor's porch monkey." Because it was a chaotic moment, and many were enraged by the violence of the police, the comments were not publicly addressed in the moment. Later, there was a private conversation about how the comments were wrong and racist.

The fallout was intense. Activists of color in and around FNB backed away from the group, both because of these comments themselves and the lack of understanding of white supremacy indicated by other FNBers' responses. Some white members of East Bay FNB stepped away from working closely with SF FNB, demanding that other FNBers hold the middle-class white FNB member accountable for the comments. While the member in question eventually stepped back from the group, committing to reflect on his actions, there was little discussion in the larger group about what happened, why it was racist, and what FNB could do to increase the

understanding of white supremacy in the group.[13] FNB members could have reached out to allied organizations in the community and talked openly about what happened. We could have asked for feedback, critique, and suggestions, and brought those back to the group. It could have been a way for FNB to build a commitment to racial justice as part of the group's economic justice work, strengthen relationships with activists of color, and expand FNB's overall vision and strategy. Instead, most addressed the incident as the mistake of an individual who should deal with it on his own.

I raise this to emphasize how our work can develop in contradictory ways. When a mostly white group like FNB engages in political work, white privilege will influence how the group develops its politics and practice. A group can choose to also have anti-racism shape its politics and practice, but that must be a conscious decision with a plan for moving it forward. Even then, white privilege as a material and psychological force will still manifest. The point is not to become "perfect" but to become praxis-oriented and understand change as a long-term process. In the example above, the racist comments and lack of organizational response represent the larger historical forces of white supremacy in this country and the reality of how racism has divided social change movements. In FNB, this could have been a moment for internal and external discussion and reflection on racism that moves beyond "racist statements are bad" to an understanding of how white supremacy is central in this society and how anti-racism can be central to movements for liberation.

Building the Food Not Bombs Movement, 1991–1995

The Gulf War of 1991 radicalized tens of thousands of activists. After the big marches and the formal end of the war, many were searching for ways to take sustained and effective political action beyond protests. FNB groups in Long Beach, Berkeley, Boston, and San Francisco served food to thousands of people at anti-war demonstrations, spreading the ideas of FNB through their example and literature. In 1992, FNB co-founders Keith McHenry and C.T. Butler published *Food Not Bombs: How to Feed the Hungry and Build Community,* a guide to starting up an FNB group. It included a comprehensive discussion of getting a group started, recipes and diagrams of literature tables and field kitchens, and an overview of FNB politics. Then,

in November of 1992, SF FNB hosted a national FNB gathering of seventy people representing twelve groups. This gathering marked an important turning point for FNB. It helped to create a collective identity through shared politics and work, formed the basis for coordinated action, and increased momentum to build the FNB movement.

To help share information among existing chapters and connect with new chapters, SF FNB began producing a newsletter called *The Menu,* with Keith McHenry as its driving force. Each issue was a compilation of interviews and news articles about FNB, copies of FNB flyers, handwritten letters explaining what individual chapters were doing, and announcements for upcoming actions and gatherings in the extended anti-authoritarian Left. *The Menu* came out two to six times a year for the next seven years, and Keith sent copies to every FNB group. He also made thousands of FNB buttons and T-shirts for FNB chapters to order wholesale and use for their fundraising. The adoption and widespread use of the FNB logo—a raised fist with a carrot—visually represented unity among FNB chapters. The Long Beach FNB chapter, the third FNB group to form, helped over a dozen FNB groups in Southern California get off the ground. Activists like Camille Huidor, Jeff Larson, Seth Dockstader, and others helped groups get organized. They shared insights and skills from their experience, gave groups seed money for cooking equipment, and followed up to see how they were doing. They provided political and technical leadership as well as personal support to help groups build their own momentum. Long Beach FNB was one of the most organized and effective anarchist groups in Southern California at that time and they provided a direct example for hundreds of activists in the region.

Over the next few years, FNB groups jumped from a dozen to over a hundred and fifty across the United States and Canada. The media attention created by the Matrix program and arrests of SF FNB activists helped to publicize FNB, but the main factor for the growing numbers of groups was the do-it-yourself attitude that encouraged everyone to start a group. Radical publications, activist newspapers, and independently produced zines carried reports and stories from FNB groups in their local areas, usually accompanied by calls to get involved or start your own group. Groups of friends formed FNB groups in cities, towns, and suburbs in both urban and rural environments across the United States and Canada.

FNB groups ranged greatly in size, capacity, organizational structure, and work. Many FNB groups were started and run by young people between fifteen and twenty-five years of age, while others were founded by older 1960s-era activists. Many were multigenerational, with members ranging in age from thirteen to eighty. While there were many exceptions, the vast majority of FNB groups and members came out of punk and hippie subcultures. While many people of color played leading roles in and were members of FNB groups, most FNBers were white. And although significant numbers of working-class and poor people played leading roles in and were members of FNB groups, many more FNBers were middle-class. Groups operated with volunteer bases ranging from as few as four to as many as a hundred: most chapters had a core group of about fifteen people. Some held community meals once per week, while others served daily. Some shared food regularly with twenty people; others served hundreds. Some had deep connections in the broader community; others existed primarily in punk/activist countercultural communities. Some were organized as collectives with weekly meetings and work committees to take on various projects; others existed simply as loose networks of cookhouses. Many FNB groups joined or formed campaigns to resist local anti-homeless ordinances and worked for affordable housing. In addition to their local work, FNB groups came together to serve food at marches, encampments at the Nevada Test Site and Big Mountain, and activist gatherings and conferences.

Different FNB groups collaborated regionally on projects, and in many areas around the country FNB groups helped start up other activist projects such as micro-powered radio stations, Critical Mass bike rides, books to prisoner groups, political prisoner support groups, locals of the IWW, community gardens, and activist community centers.

In 1995, SF FNB prepared to host an international FNB gathering to further build the FNB movement. The United Nations would be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary in San Francisco, and SF FNB wanted to use the UN gathering as an opportunity to protest the Matrix program as an international human rights violation. The plan was twofold: first, bring hundreds of FNBers from around the United States and Canada to build the FNB movement. Then, organize confrontational protests to draw attention to the homeless crisis in San Francisco, violations of economic human rights in the United States and the need to redirect money for war to serving

human needs. To build momentum for what came to be called the "UN50 gathering," Keith McHenry went on a fifty-city speaking tour throughout the United States and Canada entitled "The Rent Is Theft Tour." He brought with him a mini-documentary on SF FNB, the Matrix program, and what to expect at the UN50 gathering, along with a call for participation.

SF FNB was already building a human rights analysis to frame economic injustice in the United States and the arrests for serving free food. This strategy was largely developed by FNBer Hugh Mejia, a biracial Marxist who lived well below the poverty line, read the *London Financial Times* and the *New York Times* daily, and worked out of the Coalition office. He photocopied countless articles on global poverty, international corporate power, and the military industrial complex to distribute at meetings and on our literature tables at servings. He also developed a plan to put pressure on city hall and use the Matrix program to talk about hunger, poverty, and homelessness in the United States.

The UN50 gathering took place over two weeks in June. More than four hundred FNB activists converged, representing over forty groups from the United States and Canada. The gathering had internal and external components. Internally, there were workshops on how to start groups and projects like Cop Watch, Street Watch, Books to Prisoners, micro-powered radio, needle exchange, community gardens, and FNB. Earth First! led workshops on "Revolutionary Ecology" and "Organizing 101." The IWW led sessions on worker organizing and anarchist economics. Skill-specific workshops included: how to plan an action, self-defense techniques, composting, dealing with police infiltration, and cooking. There were workshops on organizing in rural areas, consensus decision-making, direct action organizing, homeless people's civil rights, multiculturalism in FNB, and five sessions on sexism (one for women, one for men, and others that were mixed-gender). Six of the workshops were either women-only or were focused on women, ranging in topics from computer skills to self-defense.

Externally, there were protests every day along with a half-dozen concerts and parties. Lunch and dinner servings at United Nations Plaza near Civic Center became stages for protests during which fifty police at a time confiscated food and arrested servers. FNBers from all over North America cooked, served, and went to jail together. There was also a tent city civil disobedience, a HNJ housing takeover, and the annual Queer Pride

march. At one point, fifty people marched spontaneously to Union Square where thousands of onlookers and international press were waiting for President Clinton's motorcade, resulting in a standoff with the police. We topped this later when FNB showed up across the street from a reelection fundraiser for Mayor Jordan. Through the media, we were able to communicate our opposition to both the Matrix program and the mayor. We were often referred to as "the mayor's staunchest critics," but it was hard for us to effectively communicate our larger message about the need to guarantee economic human rights.

At the end of the gathering, there was one last march for former Black Panther and journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal who was on death row in Pennsylvania and scheduled to be executed that summer. His trial had been internationally condemned as unjust, but many of us hadn't heard of him before the action. The International Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia (ICFFM), based in Philadelphia, had put out a call for militant actions to stop his execution and win a new trial. In response, a group of East Bay anarchists organized the march. Seven hundred people took the streets, marching into the Mission District with hundreds of gasoline-soaked torches, chanting: "Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, tear down the prisons wall by wall!" Thousands of residents came out of stores and houses to watch. In front of a police station, some marchers pulled a dumpster into the street, knocked it over, and lit it on fire. The police, caught off guard, eventually corralled marchers into a side street and arrested nearly three hundred people. The march and Mumia's case became leading stories in all the local media. Many actions around the country, combined with an effective legal strategy, won a stay of execution. The ICFFM gave SF FNB special recognition for the role we had played.[14] Arrests at the UN50 Gathering, including those at the Mumia march, totaled about five hundred. The two weeks had been hugely successful in generating a shared sense of movement and camaraderie among FNBers from all over the United States and Canada. People came away with skills, experience, confidence, and connections. We had forged powerful relationships through direct action, community celebration, and close collective work. The actions put pressure on Mayor Jordan and helped bring U.S. poverty into discussions during the official UN anniversary program.

The Defeat of Mayor Jordan and the Matrix Program

In San Francisco politics, the crisis of homelessness and broad opposition to the Matrix program led to Frank Jordan's defeat in November of 1995. Leading up to the election, the progressive weekly *Bay Guardian* asked the mayoral candidates if they would arrest FNB. All said no, except Jordan. The *Bay Guardian* then asked if they would maintain the Matrix program. Again, every candidate except Jordan said no. The leading candidates still generally supported the same pro-corporate, anti-working class measures, but knew they needed to distance themselves from Jordan and the Matrix program. A clearer victory was the election of Terence Hallinan to district attorney. Hallinan had pledged that he would not prosecute FNB arrests, and would work against punitive measures targeting homeless people. With the defeat of the Matrix program and more breathing room for FNB, we entered into a new phase marked by growth, internal struggle, and a new understanding of SF FNB as an important part of a growing international movement for economic justice and against global capitalism.

SF Food Not Bombs and the Struggle to Build an Anarchist and Feminist Organization, 1995–1998

We came out of the UN50 gathering feeling connected to a growing movement of FNB chapters. With the euphoria of the gathering and the defeat of Jordan still in the air, underlying tensions in SF FNB began to surface.

Crisis of Leadership and Organizational Opportunities

The election of Willie Brown formally ended the Matrix program, but it didn't take long for Brown to continue the practices of Matrix without the name. Ticketing of homeless people increased and police sweeps continued. But more economic justice organizations with a community organizing focus and full-time staff organizers were either gaining momentum or recently forming. Leading the movement were Mission Agenda, the Day Labor Program, POWER (People Organized to Win Employment Rights),

the Chinese Progressive Association, the Eviction Defense Network, St. Peter's Housing Committee, along with the Coalition on Homelessness, Religious Witness with Homeless People, the Tenants Union, and many others.

Still, the defeat of Jordan ended the arrests of SF FNB for several years. This had immediate impacts on the group. Many of the homeless and poor people who had worked with FNB focused on other struggles, working with groups like those listed above. At the same time, many of the working-class volunteers in FNB, particularly women, continued their work in FNB, often taking on more leadership. Significantly, there was also now space for long-existing tensions and conflicts to emerge openly. In the following section, I discuss some of these major issues we faced, focusing on the process of change. While I separate them out for the sake of clarity, it's important to recognize that the tensions and issues overlapped and shaped one another. Throughout this period, our overall work continued, and we continued to grow as a dynamic community. The hard internal work I discuss here relates to challenges experienced by many activist groups and important lessons can be drawn from them. The key issues we faced centered on: accountability, leadership, finances, structure, sexism, feminism, political orientation, developing a democratic collective process, and creating a culture of trust and empowerment to give our process meaning.

Food Not Bombs and the Culture of Crisis Organizing

During the Matrix program, SF FNB was up against city hall, the police, and major business interests in one of the largest financial centers in the world.[15]

Nationally, neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s had led to a massive and entrenched epidemic of homelessness. San Francisco's housing prices, rates of eviction, and per-capita homeless population all climbed to the highest rates in the country.[16] Moreover, the state of California and the city of San Francisco have often been staging grounds for the ruling class and right-wing forces to first implement reactionary policies before launching them nationally. In this way, the Matrix program was put forward as the future of national policies on homelessness, and SF FNB was committed to doing everything in its power to stop it. We knew that we were

fighting for an economic justice agenda not just in San Francisco, but in the whole country. This struggle took a profound toll on SF FNB's organizational structure and internal culture.

SF FNB had grown dramatically and taken on a much higher level of work from 1992 to 1995. As we weathered state repression, we developed an internal culture based on crisis-response. By the winter of 1995, the existing structure mainly designated roles and responsibilities for accomplishing the basic work of day-to-day servings. However, there was tremendous tension and confusion about leadership, accountability, and power for the many necessary responsibilities beyond this basic work. Meanwhile, we put a tremendous amount of energy into legal, media and alliance building strategies, as well as a major strategy to build the larger FNB movement. All of this work was discussed in the entire group, but the majority of the strategy development was happening informally in smaller groups.

All of us who have been in emergency situations responding to crises know that some familiar patterns can develop. The people with the most experience, confidence, and trust from other people generally take the lead. This can be a good thing, but it can also be problematic. This is particularly the case when nearly all the leaders are white and male; when the internal political culture doesn't recognize privileges based on systemic oppression like white supremacy and male supremacy; and there is little practice of supporting other people to take on leadership because there is a rejection that leadership exists at all. Those with privilege often relate quickest to others like them. Given that the work is informal and based on personal relationships, people with privilege can easily begin to monopolize informal leadership. In SF FNB at this time, more and more of the big-picture thinking was happening informally, among a dozen men, mostly working-class, in the group who communicated regularly with one another. While they would report back to the group about the ideas they developed together, the lack of group discussion over a long period of time led to a major division between those keeping daily operations going and those developing larger strategy.

This is not to suggest that these twelve men did all of the group's strategic thinking. Conversations at cookhouses often led to ideas for strategy that FNBers either implemented immediately, or brought to the general meeting. Even more frequently, individuals took initiative and "made things happen."

For example, members would give interviews from jail, or might stage an impromptu protest during a local politician's press conference. However, over time, FNB set its defining goals in a way that was ad hoc and crisis-oriented. This led to a small group making most major strategic decisions with little input from everyone else in SF FNB.

The economic conditions of poverty and the political conditions of state repression fueled the crisis mode. In addition to dealing with hundreds of arrests, we were confronted with a constant need to replace what little resources we had. The police seized over a dozen FNB vans, thousands of dollars' worth of literature, and hundreds of banners and signs. None of this was returned, as it was all "evidence" in an ongoing investigation against the group. Members and allies dealt with police intimidation and violence both on the streets and in jail.

Close to a dozen members went on trial facing felony charges for handing out soup. Keith McHenry fought a year-long legal battle against three such charges. To further complicate this situation, we had obtained internal police memos, won by the National Lawyers Guild in FNB court cases, that proved that undercover cops attended SF FNB meetings. The purpose of state surveillance is partially to collect information, but it is primarily designed to instill fear, which it certainly did in SF FNB. Paranoia developed, new volunteers were sometimes suspected to be undercover officers, and it took longer to trust people. It was also suspected that the police sometimes sent poor people into the group to be disruptive in exchange for dropped drug charges. Some longtime members avoided strategy conversations in large groups because of a fear that undercover police could use the information to harm FNB. Significantly, many members experienced depression and anxiety. State repression took a toll on the emotional health of the group, and it took tremendous capacity to deal with what we could, while many impacts were unaddressed due to our inexperience and lack of skills.

Our structures taxed and overwhelmed by crises of various sizes, we were not able to do serious strategic thinking in general meetings. As our meetings were open to whoever showed up and several hundred people passed through SF FNB during these years, many attendees at any given meeting were unfamiliar with group process. Our capacity to orient new people was low and "difficult" people attending the meeting were allowed to

participate in the consensus process even if they had no familiarity with the group's politics and goals. SF FNB prided itself on being a home for misfits and freaks, and all of us engaged in challenging behavior from time to time. Some, however, had more serious issues.

Our decision-making, for example, was strained by a regular stream of men who showed up at their first meeting to declare that they could solve the problem with city hall, or would try to take on major responsibilities without any grounding in the group. It was not unusual for new members to join while also dealing with major drug addictions; some existing volunteers developed drug addictions to heroin, crack, and speed. Others with severe mental illness came to meetings and cookhouses. We lacked a group understanding of how to deal with these situations and most of us lacked the skills and experience to step in individually.

The organization was overwhelmed structurally and culturally, and all of this came to a head as we dealt with a crisis of trust and accountability over money.

Group Finances and Collective Accountability

When San Francisco police told new activists in FNB that they were being used to make money for FNB leaders, they knew that financial issues can tear organizations apart. Money was indeed a major source of tension in SF FNB. Our yearly budget was small, but the questions about money raised a larger issue: who had power to make major decisions and back those decisions up with group resources?

Keith McHenry handled the group's finances at that time. He made regular reports to the group about donations received and the status of the bank account. The group had a general policy of reimbursing people for a wide range of expenses. Keeping track of the expenses during the hectic time of the Matrix program was a daunting task. While some people kept detailed records, it was hard for many in the group to know where money was going. This was compounded by the fact that many members were working outside of general meetings to develop larger strategic plans that would require big expenditures.

The group would frequently approve a plan in the abstract, but the internal logic, broader goals, and the scope of the plan would be lost in the

details of a dozen other pressing issues. Therefore, the actual expense of projects often came as a shock to people. With Keith handling the finances and developing many of these larger plans, his leadership role became the center of attention.

This was a complicated situation. Keith often got group approval for projects focused on building the larger FNB movement. He started *The Menu* and set up a toll-free phone number so people could get information and help starting up new FNB chapters. His efforts to publicize the arrests brought in a lot of financial support. He developed a whole line of FNB merchandise to use for fundraising. He also launched projects far more ambitious than anyone else imagined, and these often included much larger budgets than people were used to. His speaking tours, for example, raised concerns. When other SF FNB members protested covering these expenses, he responded very sincerely that each of us should feel encouraged to do a speaking tour and get the group to reimburse the expenses. Keith operated from the belief that everyone should take initiative, and he did support other people's ideas and proposals.

The primary problem was that Keith felt confident in his ability to provide consistent public leadership when most in the group did not, and we had little in the way of leadership development to change this. Keith ended up being the face of SF FNB in the world and therefore defined the group politically and strategically. The denial that leadership even existed made it difficult to talk about Keith's role, and even harder to talk about what it would look like for other people to take on major leadership in the group. The attitude that anyone could "just do it" had a positive side, but it failed to address the bigger power dynamics: who launched national speaking tours to represent the group and who did not? The critique was raised over and over, but proactive steps to move beyond critique were lacking. A lot of volunteers were frustrated that Keith got so much credit for work done by hundreds of people. Some talked about the power dynamics of who does and doesn't get recognized for their work, and this fueled much of the tension.

In this context, finances became the issue over which members expressed all of their frustrations over strategic decision-making, leadership, accountability, and power dynamics in the group. This came to a head in the winter of 1995 when the Berkeley-based punk band Green Day achieved

mainstream success. Green Day held a benefit concert and raised over $125,000 for five Bay Area groups: the Coalition on Homelessness, East Bay FNB, SF FNB, and two free clinics. SF FNB got $25,000 and the fight over this money was vicious. Keith presented a budget of $10,000 to cover the UN50 gathering. Several other men who were longtime FNBers came forward with outstanding debts that totaled over $5,000, and other people began making their own reimbursement requests. The anger simmering in the group exploded. Several members accused Keith of being a liar and a cheat. People began talking behind each other's backs as well as openly attacking one another at meetings. Rumors spread throughout the activist and homeless communities about Keith and others stealing money. Keith offered detailed budgets to account for money spent over the years, but the accusations only grew louder. Few stood up for him. The real issues were lost in the storm of debate over whether or not money was stolen. Trust within the group was at an all-time low.

I was one of a small group of people who worked closely with Keith on FNB movement building projects. I knew that he didn't steal money, that he put everything into building FNB. I also knew that he often moved forward on projects that he felt were important, but got little input from the larger group and that the political culture of FNB made it very difficult to get meaningful input in a timely way. At the same time, I saw that it was because of systematic sexism that some men had turned into prominent leaders, while many women talked about feeling like a "faceless" volunteer. This tension over leadership was expressing the historic and institutional relationships of power that shape how our society is organized and the cultural logic that explains them as natural.

While many of us spent a considerable amount of time talking about the problems, it became clear that as a group we were doing little to proactively change these dynamics. Instead, a culture developed where it became common to "trash-talk" FNB leaders. This only made the situation worse. Far too often, we were blaming individuals for the major problems the group was facing. This took the issues out of our larger social context and eliminated other people's responsibility. Blaming individuals, as is typically the case, led to demoralization and meant that the group didn't take responsibility for developing solutions.

The financial tensions in SF FNB began to spill over. One person upped the ante by making flyers that denounced Keith as a "poverty pimp." That FNBer sent the flyers to the Arcata City Council just as they were beginning to crack down on the Arcata FNB chapter for serving food in the local town square. The flyer included a note about the corrupt leadership of the FNB movement. To further complicate this situation, the person who made and distributed the flyer was Black. Few in the group wanted to confront him for his behavior out of fear of being called racist.[17] While that member left the group and many denounced his actions, there was never a direct organizational discussion of what had happened which meant that the group essentially abandoned Keith to individually fend off rumors and accusations. This led to a serious breach of trust in the group. Several of us stepped up to establish a financial committee with an explicit commitment to address the deeper organizational issues. The financial committee proposed guidelines for expenses while stating that this was an attempt to balance autonomy and collective accountability. We said that we wanted people to take initiative and move work forward, but that we needed clear guidelines to help us do our work and be accountable to one another. We used the proposal as a way to have conversations, both one-on-one and in small groups, with SF FNBers about leadership, accountability, and building collective power. We knew we needed to build a strong consensus around this proposal, not just to resolve the financial issues, but to begin dealing with FNB's deeper problems of trust and democratic participation. These conversations created a way for people to have in-depth discussions about the larger issues focused on a proactive process to address them. We were trying to develop an understanding that our problems were not one person's fault, but rather that we needed collective solutions to move us forward.

When the proposal for a financial committee came to the meeting, the rest of the group readily agreed to it. They felt solid trust in the committee because of the process we had gone through. Our financial situation was back on track and it stayed that way. More importantly, a shift was taking place as new leadership stepped forward to help build the structure of the group, believing that we needed clearer organizational roles, expectations and responsibilities to be more democratic, healthier, and effective in our overall work. However, the relationship between SF FNB and Keith was

critically damaged. Understandably, he was profoundly impacted by the accusations and was essentially abandoned by the group, with many current and former volunteers trash-talking him. On the other hand, there were FNBers who tried repeatedly to reach out to him and came to the conclusion that he had no interest in collective decision-making or accountability. All in all, it was a demoralizing and painful experience for many members in the group.

What Is the Real Work?

Another major tension in SF FNB revolved around what people thought was "the real work." Some thought we simply needed to get as much food out as possible, others believed that we needed to focus on direct actions to make it impossible for the local politicians to ignore the homelessness crisis. During the Matrix period, both of these positions converged as SF FNB servings led to arrests, generating regular favorable media and public attention. With the Brown administration, this was no longer the case. Meanwhile, a lot of people were burned out by the end of the Matrix program. Many questioned how effectively we were using confrontation to shift the debate on economic justice. Additionally, some people left FNB during the crisis over finances and even more left as they moved on to other work. With fewer volunteers, we were having a hard time filling the slots of daily work. In these circumstances, a group of longtime FNBers proposed that the group needed to cut back on the number of servings and strengthen other aspects of our work.

The proposal sparked huge controversy. Some argued that getting food out to people is the only reason FNB exists. Those advocating for the proposal replied that they knew this was important, but that all the soup and bagels in the world wouldn't end capitalism. They said that SF FNB needed to deal with internal issues, refocus our work on building a broader radical movement, and think in terms of quality rather than quantity. We are not just another soup kitchen, they said, and if FNBers want to make feeding people their only political work, there are other organizations to join.

Keith McHenry put forth an amendment to the proposal. He agreed we should stop the lunch meals but argued that we should continue to set up literature tables at noon, talk with people, and maintain a visible presence

outside city hall. Combining politics and food is central to FNB, he argued, and all agreed. In San Francisco, the food and literature attracted a wide spectrum of people, and one of the group's goals was to use that as an opportunity to talk with people, explain our politics, and present people with multiple options for getting involved either direct in FNB or the larger movement through various demonstrations FNB promoted. Keith's leadership was most clearly demonstrated whenever he stood behind an FNB table. He used political theatre to attract attention, often wearing a chef's uniform, or a Santa Claus costume in the winter. He was funny, told good stories, and, most importantly, loved talking with people. People of all economic backgrounds knew his name and wanted to talk with him. Keith understood the power of creatively communicating clear messages that invited other people to become part of the story to create change. And he made them laugh. Those who made the original proposal responded that the group did not have the capacity for tabling. They acknowledged the importance of the literature table as a way to engage with people, but still insisted that it was too much work. Since most of the people actually running the remaining cookhouses supported this proposal, it passed.

Of course, cutting back on the meals was challenging. The population served by FNB was generally considered the most "hardcore" of the homeless community. Many had been kicked out of other food programs, and most had been on the streets for years. It was common for us to hear people say, "This is the only food I've had today." The reality of hunger and our relationships with people on the street impacted us enormously. We prioritized immediate action over long-term planning because we felt tremendous pressure to "do *something*." Yet this urgency to act undermined most efforts to develop a plan that could accomplish anything. In our desperation, we substituted slogans for analysis and tactics for strategy. We had a reaction to what we opposed, not a vision of what we wanted. Cutting out the majority of our lunches significantly reduced the visibility of FNB servings as a protest against city hall and diminished our engagement with the broader public. In retrospect, I believe that not maintaining the mid-day literature tables was a serious mistake. Keeping them going would have pushed more of us to represent the group and talk to strangers about who we were and what we believed. It would have encouraged us to develop a diversity of public leaders. The negative reaction in SF FNB to Keith's

celebrity status often led to an unfortunate undervaluing of the work he did to engage with the broader city and articulate an anti-war, economic justice-based politics on homelessness and hunger. In our critique of an activist celebrity status, we trivialized the importance of a communication strategy, thinking of it as simply writing press releases and handing out flyers. Our fear of creating more celebrities in SF FNB led to tension over anyone representing the group. Over time the group began to have less influence on the public discussion of homelessness and poverty. Nevertheless, reducing the number of meals opened up space to take on pressing internal challenges and build the organization's capacity to democratically develop and implement strategy for our overall work.

"What Do You Mean by Organization?"

Through the discussions we had about finances and the frequency of servings, larger issues about the structure and purpose of FNB came into focus. Three different conceptions of FNB as an organization emerged:

1. **Community of Resistance.** People holding this position believed that FNB was, first and foremost, a community of people—more like an idea or action than an organization. We were building a "community of resistance" that encompassed collective houses, community gardens, worker-owned businesses, a culture of revolutionizing our daily lives, and regular actions against the state and capitalism. FNB was one of many expressions of this community. Advocates of this position argued that anyone who took part in FNB actions was automatically part of FNB. The group was open: anyone could come to public meetings and immediately take part in decision-making and other responsibilities. Therefore, the argument went, FNB did not have members but rather volunteers who took part in shared action. FNB was an activity in which a person participated rather than an organization to which a person belonged. The strength of this approach was its holistic understanding of FNB in relation to the radical community being created and an emphasis on having easy ways for people to get involved. Its weakness was its lack of guidance on how to functionally structure FNB as a democratic organization in a way

that would address the social inequalities that impact a group's function. Furthermore, it made it extremely difficult for those involved to think in terms of strategy and long-term organizing. Everyone agreed that FNB was part of a community of resistance; the disagreement was over the form FNB took and the implications form has on strategy and practice.

4. **Action-Based Group.** People holding this position believed that FNB was a group to which a person could belong. Their conception was that FNB was action-based: in other words, that the group's sole reason for existing was to continuously engage in activity on a wide range of issues, and that most internal work beyond action planning was a diversion from the groups goals. They brought proposals of action to most meetings. When there was resistance within the group to non-stop actions, they would just announce the action was happening and declare that whoever wanted to should participate. Those with this position argued that anyone could initiate activity, and that the group was primarily there to support a high level of action. The weakness of this approach was that it consistently exhausted the resources of the group and its members. It also led to situations where prominent members of the group would call for actions in the name of FNB directly after SF FNB had formally decided against the action. This exacerbated power dynamics in the group and eroded accountability. The strength of this approach was that FNB did in fact play meaningful roles in dozens of protests, community events, and marches on a wide range of issues. It made a good argument for the role of actions in building momentum and recruiting new people to help strengthen the group. People holding all three positions agreed about the importance of action; the disagreement was about the relationship between actions and the broader work.

2. **Praxis-Based Organizing.** People holding this position believed that FNB was an organization possessing broadly defined, shared politics beyond the Three Principles, a general approach to work, a structure (albeit one that needed to be formalized and developed), and membership that needed to be accountable to a general standard of behavior and work. Furthermore, proponents of this position believed

> FNB needed to create mechanisms to share power in the group, develop better analysis and practice to fight all systems of oppression, and develop plans of action in a collective way. "Praxis" refers to a process of applying theory to practice, reflecting on the practice to draw out lessons, and then applying those lessons to improve both the theory and the practice.[18]

The weakness of this third approach was that it demanded a higher level of consistent participation in internal organizational issues, which competed for members' time with cookhouses and actions. The strength was that through collective planning and decision-making there was a much higher level of shared investment in the group's work. People holding all three of these positions believed in equality of power; the disagreement was over the strategy and process by which we create equality. There was also a difference about the role of internal leadership development and political education. People holding the other positions agreed that these things were important, but the culture or work they created made it nearly impossible for either to happen.

Along with many others, I advocated for the praxis-based organizing approach and worked to build SF FNB as an anarchist organization as part of a broader social justice movement. We agreed that people in and around FNB were members of a larger community of resistance, but felt that we needed to be clear about who and what we were as a group. This way we would be able to advance a strategy and develop consistent membership, so we could learn and grow together through practice and reflection. We believed that organizations are key to building collective power, and that, over time, they help us create a shared memory that can lead to a higher level of learning and growth. As part of this approach, I began identifying myself as an "FNB organizer" rather than a volunteer or member. I did this, and encouraged others "doing organizing" to do so, as a way for us to be aware of this work, step further into these roles, help make the work of organizing visible and more accessible to others, and develop an understanding and respect for leadership and leadership development in the group culture. I had been learning about organizing from many longtime FNB members who had organizing experience from work in other groups. Many of these people also began calling themselves FNB organizers, and

began to bring their experiences more directly into the group through workshops and skillshares. As I was significantly influenced by the organizing tradition in the civil rights movement and the role of organizers like Ella Baker, who emphasized that the role of a leader is to develop other leaders, studying past movements provided insights for thinking about our work in FNB.

Being FNB organizers meant that in addition to taking on the regular responsibilities of volunteers, we had three other areas of work. First, we actively worked to build FNB by recruiting people and, to the best of our abilities, helping them become part of the group. This meant trying to both keep a bird's-eye view of the group's overall work so as to create a more organized division of labor, and situate that work in the context of our larger political goals. When problems or issues came up in the group, we saw it as our responsibility to help deal with them rather than turn away and hope that someone else would or that they would just go away—an approach that had repeatedly failed in the past. Second, we tried to collectivize these tasks by naming them and making them part of the structure, encouraging other FNBers to take them on individually, or form committees to share the work. Third, we were in communication with other social justice groups and often developed proposals for action or initiated discussions to plan actions to further our goals. Over time, we normalized this approach to SF FNB's work as more and more of us developed a praxis-based organizing approach. However, we didn't want to just have a good process of praxis; we also believed that we needed a radical Left politics to anchor our approach.

For Anarchism: Developing Our Politics

In discussions during the UN50 gathering, longtime FNBers from across the United States and Canada talked about our shared politics and found strength in a higher level of political unity beyond the Three Principles. Coming out of this, a growing number of us in SF FNB believed that we needed a stronger political analysis to help guide us. To help move in this direction, we initiated a process to clarify the broader political framework of the group. We knew that the majority of SF FNBers already identified as anarchists, but we wanted to create time and space for group discussion to both explore our politics and develop a shared vision. Through articulating,

discussing, and clarifying our politics, we believed SF FNB would be in a better position to build our organization and act strategically in our work.

Influenced by these conversations, I wrote "Towards a Non-Violent Society: A Position Paper on Anarchism, Social Change and Food Not Bombs." I distributed this text widely through cookhouses and meetings, and formally presented it to the group several months later. In this essay, I argued that while FNBers had Three Principles of consensus, non-violence, and vegetarianism, these concepts on their own were vague. I suggested that our politics had deeper meanings based on how we defined those principles informally and how we put them into practice. In addition to taking on the root causes of hunger and poverty, I wrote, "we attempt to confront and dismantle the power structures of patriarchy, white supremacy, and other forms of domination in society, in our organization, and within our own heads." I also presented a general argument that the state and capitalism are violent systems that concentrate power while denying the majority of people control over their own lives. Furthermore, I suggested that FNB comes out of a tradition of nonviolent anarchist resistance and ended with a quote from Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin's influential book *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* about the importance of building the new society in the shell of the old.

Even though most FNBers identified as anarchists, and my essay was essentially an overview of how FNB practiced anarchist politics and worked for an anarchist society, the paper helped to spark conversations about what those politics actually meant for us. The primary goal of this proposal was to develop a more rigorous and collective understanding of anarchist politics to guide SF FNB. We wanted members to discuss the importance of food and housing for all in relationship to anti-capitalism, democratic self-governance, and a system of economic cooperation. We worked to develop a group analysis that described how we were fighting against systems of oppression that position each of us within hierarchies—hierarchies that don't go away just because we say we are radicals. We also wanted to root anarchism in movement history to help us see ourselves as part of long-term struggles for social justice. Four months after the proposal was circulated, the group formally agreed to it. We decided to write a vision statement to further clarify our politics. Alice Nuccio, a working-class, queer FNBer took up the challenge of moving the group through the writing process. Alice had

been part of the anarchist-led direct action anti-nuke movement in the 1980s and had been involved with FNB for years. Over the next few months, she worked on drafts and distributed them at meetings and cookhouses. She used this process as a method for all of us to reflect on our deeper politics and collected feedback along the way. After months of work, the group approved the vision statement she had written. It was an outline of what SF FNB stood for, what we were against, and what we wanted.

The goal of the statement was to put the existing work of SF FNB into a context that would help us to understand our actions as part of a larger vision and movement. We used the vision statement, along with other short texts introducing the work of SF FNB and the Three Principles, as orientation materials for new members. We also combined the vision statement and the "Position Paper on Anarchism" into a pamphlet that we distributed widely to help further develop the politics of the FNB network.[19]

Three Strategies for Food Not Bombs

The most significant impact of this process was its clarification of the three strategic frameworks to contextualize our day-to-day work. For us, a "framework" was a set of political assumptions and political goals that helped us understand FNB's organizational tasks. These frameworks had always been central to what we did, but making them more clear and explicit offered us a set of tools for discussing our work, developing strategy, and evaluating our successes or shortcomings.

We believed that these frameworks applied to all FNB groups, and we actively worked to popularize them. I phrase these frameworks here in the present tense because they are still used by FNB today.

1. **Social Change Not Charity:** FNB believes that society needs revolutionary change, and that the current economic system is fundamentally unjust because it creates inequality through exploitation of the many for the benefit of the few. FNB understands charity as something that addresses the symptoms of the problem rather than the problem itself. The group recognizes the need for all the kinds of services that are called "charity," but FNB believes that we can end hunger through reorganizing the production and distribution of the

economy to meet human needs. We do not want to provide services and maintain the status quo by helping it deal with its worst excesses. We want to highlight the misery created by the system and build social justice movements for systemic change. FNB groups often struggle to keep the focus on services and social change and not to slip into a "charity" mode. This is why we define our food servings as "community meals." We see FNB as a community response to injustice.

2. **Reclaim Public Space and Struggle for Economic Justice:** Under pressure from the business community, many municipal governments have passed legislation to force homeless people out of public spaces. This is often the first phase of gentrification. Most FNB groups share free food in public parks, squares, and civic centers. These are generally areas where homeless people congregate, and they often become sites of struggle when police receive orders to push out all "vagrants." Reclaiming public spaces and defending the rights of homeless people to be in them is part of the larger fight for economic justice. FNB serves food in public as a way to both support these rights and to increase the visibility of anti-capitalist opposition to poverty. Through challenging particular policies that enforce economic inequality, our goal is to challenge the logic that explains all social inequalities as simply sad, unchangeable reality. This commitment to serving in public has fueled most of the conflicts between FNB groups and local governments.

3. **Solidarity to Build Our Movements:** FNB actively works to support other groups and movements working for positive social change. FNB groups regularly prepare meals for social justice groups' demonstrations, marches, meetings, and conferences. We believe that the issues we face are interwoven with one another, and that we need movements that bring our work together into a coherent challenge to injustice with a vision of a new society guiding us. Solidarity between struggles will improve our chances to make meaningful, systemic change. Overall, this process of successfully developing collective analysis strengthened the group. We had a much stronger foundation as we continued working to build democratic structures to address power dynamics, leadership, accountability, and democracy.

Sexual Harassment and Anti-Sexist Struggle

About half of SF FNB's members were women. Women ran cookhouses, led actions, and risked arrest regularly. Yet at meetings, men were often in the majority and tended to speak far more often. While people of all genders experienced sexual harassment, women experienced it the most—both inside and outside of FNB. Sexism and sexual harassment were thus ongoing, ever-present struggles in SF FNB.[20]

Most men in the group supported feminist politics and struggled to incorporate gender equality into their daily lives. There were also men in the group who came to fight poverty and didn't share the overall political commitments of FNB. Overall, sexism played out in the group in subtle and blatant ways. The first main concern raised in the group was the fact that women in the group were hit on by men over and over again, and this created, at times, either an unsafe environment or a highly offensive one. Often, these interactions happened between men who were over forty years old and women in their late teens and twenties. Women in FNB regularly challenged and temporarily stopped these situations, but the incidents would continue to occur with other women in the organization. When women did raise these problems within the group, men routinely dismissed them as simply personal issues between individuals. When sexual harassment was happening, some men frequently stepped forward to support women to end it. However, when a broader call went out from women to change the overall culture of the group in which harassment was happening, there was usually a long silence from men experiencing fear, frustration, and confusion about what to do.

In addition to sexual harassment within the group, women were sometimes harassed at the community meals. Men waiting for food often asked women in FNB for their telephone numbers or made comments about their bodies. Women usually had each other's backs in these situations, and either responded directly or diverted the attention. They also frequently checked in with one another about these incidents. In contrast, men typically ignored these situations and rarely followed up with women afterwards. Given these conditions, dozens of women left the group in frustration and worked elsewhere. Fortunately, there were also FNB women

in the early 1990s who formed women-only cookhouses and helped bring a feminist analysis into the group. The UN50 gathering helped initiate a shift in SF FNB around gender politics. With FNBers from all over the United States and Canada in town for several weeks, feminist politics became more central. Feminists in SF FNB found support from women around the country who had dealt with these situations before. Visiting women and men openly challenged sexist behavior. As noted above, the gathering included multiple sessions and workshops on sexism, as well as women-only spaces. During some of the actions, a crew of women and men experimented with a different media strategy. We told our main media coordinator, Hugh Mejia, that we wanted reporters directed to women and we then asked multiple women if they wanted to be media spokespeople. The media plan was successful. Women represented FNB in the media, and this was a proactive step towards changing the situation instead of just critiquing it. After the UN50 gathering and the end of the Matrix program, women in SF FNB took the initiative to address sexual harassment. Women who had been discussing these dynamics for years began asking men in the group to step up and take responsibility. Women also began "calling out" men more often at cookhouses, meetings, and servings. When a woman was harassed, multiple women would bring the issue to the group and also individually confront the man responsible. The behaviors they were challenging included unwanted touch, sexual comments, and phone calls to women after being specifically asked to stop.

When women challenged these men, they generally included an explanation about why something was inappropriate along with a demand to stop. Some men complained that they were being pressured to leave the group. However, women clearly explained that the men were being asked to change their behavior and begin listening to women's feedback as constructive. If their disrespectful behavior continued, however, they would in fact be asked to leave the group. Some men countered that it was only natural for them to be attracted to women and pointed to the fact that people with FNB were often involved with each other. The process of responding to these arguments helped us articulate what made these behaviors unacceptable despite all excuses. Led by members who contributed their experience and study through one-on-one conversations

and group discussions, we developed a feminist analysis to situate sexual harassment and sexism in a systemic understanding of power.

The analysis we developed might be summarized as follows: patriarchy is a key oppression shaping the economic, political, and social institutions and cultures of our society, and activists are not outside of these relationships of power. In addition to shaping society, patriarchy is also internalized. Men internalize superiority over women and this is expressed through entitlement to women's bodies, labor, and emotional and sexual attention. This relationship of systemic patriarchal power and constant sexist behavior from men is the context in which men hitting on women takes place. While there is a difference between attraction expressed in a respectful way and sexist harassment, the overall culture of the group was negatively impacted by men acting out entitled sexist behavior. If women are hit on while also not receiving support to step up into leadership, this relationship of power feeds on itself. The interactions, in other words, are not about attraction, but about power and what we do to either reproduce or challenge injustice.[21]

Over the next year, some men left the group on their own or were asked to leave. Asking people to leave was controversial, and provoked a range of responses. Those who wanted to remain neutral were told that their refusal to take a position was in fact supporting the status quo of unchecked sexism. Some members argued that we should never kick anyone out of the organization. Women and a growing number of men responded that sexism, sexual harassment, and the group's inability to challenge it had been kicking out women for years. We could either challenge this behavior and change the culture of the group, or else have women and feminist men continue to leave the group so jerks could remain unaccountable. If men left the group because they thought it was unfair for women to call them on their sexist behavior, then they were showing us where they really stood regarding gender justice. If men came into the group and harassed women, then they would be asked to stop and given an explanation about why this behavior was not acceptable. If they made no commitment to change and continued this behavior, they would be asked to leave the group and would be banned from cookhouses and meetings. If they made a commitment to working on these issues, then we would develop next steps.

Most instances of sexual harassment in SF FNB involved inappropriate comments, inappropriate touching, or inappropriately violating women's personal space. One of the more volatile incidents demonstrates a common dynamic which began with two men making vulgar sexual comments to a young woman of color running a cookhouse.

Camisha had started an FNB chapter in her hometown and was new to SF FNB. She was nineteen and had never met the two men, who were the only other volunteers that day. One of the men, Steve, was in his fifties, and had been in and out of SF FNB for years; the other man was in his twenties and new to the group. She called a couple of longtime FNBers to come support her in asking the men to leave and not return to her home. The longtime FNBers agreed and sent Jonathan over to support her.

When Jonathan arrived, he asked her how she was doing. Steve responded for her: "She's doing as well as she can considering she's been hanging out with two stoned, horny men all afternoon." Jonathan asked why he would say such a thing, and Steve said he was trying to be funny. Camisha explained why this comment and the many others he had made were not "jokes" and made her uncomfortable. Steve said he meant no harm, and that she and Jonathan should lighten up. Camisha explained why she was asking them to leave and why they were not welcome in her home. The two men left, dismissing the whole thing as an example of "overly sensitive, politically correct" activists overreacting. Jonathan talked about the incident with them, asking them questions about what had happened, and explained how this behavior was in total contradiction of FNB's goals of non-violence and equality. Camisha later asked the two men to come to an FNB meeting and explain why they thought their behavior was justified. Steve did so, and gave a speech about how he should have the right to say whatever he likes, because it's just his style. We formally asked him to leave FNB until he was ready to have a conversation with Camisha acknowledging her perspective and to behave in a respectful way that reflected the values of the group.

Subsequently, the other man left FNB on his own because he didn't want to be around "PC police." Two weeks later, he physically assaulted a woman at a party where SF FNB members were present. Several FNBers agreed to try and find him and talk about what happened at the party, with the short-term goal of letting him know two things: first, that a community of people were demanding that he both get help and apologize for his actions, and

furthermore that if he refused to do so, he would be banned from all FNB community meals and events. We learned that he had left town with several possible destinations. We contacted social justice activists in each of those areas to warn them. We never heard from or of him again. Dealing with this situation helped us clarify our guidelines for relating to sexual harassment, and it strengthened the overall commitment in the group to creating a safe, encouraging, and empowering culture in our cookhouses and community meals. The group shifted powerfully by agreeing that we needed to take responsibility for what was happening between individuals and begin holding people accountable.[22] We were changing the group culture. As we formally committed ourselves to feminist politics—to challenging patriarchy both in society and within the group—our internal dynamics shifted.

Between 1995 and 2000, we asked over a dozen men to leave the group. At first, mainly women took on this work. Over time, though, we encouraged more men to speak to other men about sexual harassment and promote a culture of respect. Some would still insist that we shouldn't have kicked men out of the group, but rather worked to rehabilitate them, since expulsion doesn't stop destructive behavior. We agreed that we needed long-term solutions to challenge and end sexual harassment. The reality was that if the men had expressed any interest in rectifying the situation, we would have developed next steps. Given our limited capacity, however, we prioritized changing the group culture by making it clear that we had feminist expectations, and that there would be consequences for repeated violation of those expectations. We began studying and discussing feminist politics in our work. We focused on recruiting more women, supporting women's leadership, supporting feminist men's leadership, and bringing a feminist perspective into our work. It was a powerful experience to put feminism and accountability into practice in the group. Over time, the group tried many different approaches. For example, in the late 1990s, an anti-sexism work group developed a workshop on dealing with sexism and sexual harassment at community meals. The workshop included role-playing common situations and trying out ways to intervene, de-escalate, and provide support. The workshop increased ongoing communication within the group about how to deal with these situations and also support one another. What worked for some people, however, didn't work for others.

Furthermore, there was a range of opinions about what constituted unacceptable behavior.

The baseline commitment to challenge sexual harassment opened up the space to experiment with ways to address it, rather than fighting over the need to address it in the first place. Throughout this time period, people in and around FNB dated one another and there was a healthy culture of sexual freedom, communication about consent and desire, and a celebration of our lives and work for justice at countless parties and get-togethers. While actual incidents of sexual harassment happened only periodically, the impact they had on the culture was significant. The main change through this process was that FNB as an organization was taking responsibility to promote expectations of how people in FNB treated each other and that the organization would play a feminist role when sexist harassment happened.

Challenging Male Supremacy and Developing Feminist Practice

With our successful efforts against sexual harassment gaining momentum, the broader struggle against sexism within FNB began to focus more on decision-making power. SF FNB functioned through three main levels of decision-making. First, there was the day-to-day decision-making, primarily based in the cookhouses. Second, there were decisions pertaining to SF FNB's internal development and local alliances. Third, there were decisions about strategies to build the FNB movement. We had a strong level of gender equality on the first level. The decisions at the second level were mostly made by men, but there was still strong participation from women. The third level was almost entirely men. The work to develop equality in the group took on two main approaches: distributing roles and responsibilities, and challenging the sexist power relations in the group.

As women challenged sexism, they also talked explicitly about creating a more democratic organization with increased participation from women and men. We went to work developing ways to share leadership in the group. We determined that leadership was primarily a set of responsibilities and tasks, and that we needed to create a system of rotation to make sure power wasn't concentrated in a few hands. We had a basic process for transferring skills, and we encouraged people to step up and take on responsibilities. In addition, we mapped out each of the responsibilities and

tasks that went into running the group. This demystified the process, and more people took on these roles, including more women. However, even with a commitment to rotation, key leadership responsibilities remained in only a few hands. Meanwhile, due to the success of SF FNB's efforts to challenge sexual harassment and sexism, more women were coming to meetings and, overall, more women were joining and staying in the group.

While we worked to change our structure, the conversations about why we needed to change the group had begun to shift our prevailing politics and culture. Johnna Bossuot, a white woman from a rural working-class background, was a leading organizer of SF FNB who played a pivotal role in challenging sexism and creating shared leadership in the group. She and other women had one-on-one conversations with most of the men in SF FNB to challenge and encourage us to deal with sexism both in ourselves and within the group. In general, these conversations pointed to specific things we had said, ways we had acted, and effects we had had on women in the group.[23] It took a lot of emotion and political energy from women to initiate and have these conversations, as Johnna and others attested. Ultimately, these intentional one-on-one conversations were key to moving the group forward. Alongside these conversations, Johnna and Alice Nuccio revived the defunct Women's Autonomous Cookhouse as a space for women to come together and support each other's participation in SF FNB. The existence of the cookhouse sparked conversations about sexism and feminism as new people would inevitably inquire about it, thereby offering us an opportunity for discussion. The cookhouse proved successful as a space for developing women's leadership.

Johnna followed this up by inviting women activists within both SF FNB and the broader activist community to a series of women-only discussions, focused on how women could support each other and work through issues of internalized sexism that divide them from one another. The discussion was intergenerational and brought together newer, often younger women in the group with longtime members.

Men in the group participated in this work, too. We had one-on-one discussions with each other and encouraged more people, particularly women, to take on responsibilities. This was based on an analysis of how gendered power dynamics encourage men to take on responsibilities while

discouraging women from doing the same. Men who were doing media work were asked by both women and men to regularly prioritize women as spokes-people. Over time, more women began representing the group in the media. Some men proactively talked with other men about problematic behavior and politics.

Women, meanwhile, successfully pushed for a literature committee to bring more people into the process of developing analysis, with an emphasis on women's participation. However, the literature committee lacked a culture of political discussion. The level of trust was so low that we often spent more time debating exact wording than clarifying the goals and purpose of the document we were creating. We hungered for a process of developing collective analysis in a way that could build both analytical skills and trust along the way, but we didn't know how. While we did develop some literature, the committee was largely ineffective. Literature committee meetings were painful as we frequently blamed ourselves, or one another, for our failures to overcome relationships of power based on class and gender. Sometimes we believed that if we just tried hard enough, we could bring equality into existence by our force of will, and that our shortcomings were entirely personal rather than related to the conditions of the world we lived in.

Another reason we had problems with trusting one another was the constant influx of people whose politics were vastly different. We were starting to institutionalize our politics, but because our meetings were open to the public and all decisions were based on consensus, we often met frustrating stumbling blocks. For example: SF FNB members were involved in a coalition to plan a twenty-fifth-anniversary celebration of the *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court ruling. Yet when a proposal was put forward to cater the celebration, a new volunteer blocked the decision. He argued that it was a violation of our commitment to non-violence to "promote abortion." It was one of those moments in a meeting when I asked myself, "How did we end up here?" Although we had participated in and supported pro-choice events in the past and had even agreed to be part of the coalition, a few longtime FNBers argued that the block should stand because that's how consensus was supposed to work. This quickly turned into a debate about the mechanics of consensus. In the end, the decision was formally blocked, but most of us ignored this and went ahead anyway. We immediately

marked this moment as an example of a key organizational weakness. In response to this situation, John Viola, a driving force behind two longtime cookhouses (the "Lexington St. House" and the "Sleepy House"), wrote a position paper entitled "SF Food Not Bombs, Reproductive Freedom, and Women's Liberation." This paper served to elaborate and develop broader support in the group for feminist politics. When we reached consensus on John's position paper, we also agreed that from that point on if someone wanted to challenge the established politics of the group, then that person needed to take up the issue as a separate agenda item and propose the change. FNB was not going to reopen discussion of its fundamental principles every time a new person joined the group.

Soon after, we formally adopted the vision statement that Alice had written coming out of discussions about anarchism and the politics of FNB. This further clarified our politics and gave us a framework from which to support a broad range of issues and struggles. Some of us argued that we now needed to incorporate clearer membership expectations that would include support for the group's overarching politics as represented in the vision statement. Importantly, by this point in the group's development, most of us were talking about FNB *members* rather than *volunteers;* this represented our growing understanding of FNB as an organization in which people were accountable to one another and to the group's politics. To further institutionalize feminist politics, FNB members loretta carbone, Alice Nuccio, Yael Grauer, and Johnna Bossuot developed and led an anti-sexism workshop for SF FNB. They used participatory exercises to develop a common understanding of what sexism is and how it operates in society and in FNB. We shared our experiences challenging sexism and our strategies for making this a regular practice in the group. We distributed notes from the workshop widely throughout the broader FNB community.

The second half of the 1990s saw more anti-sexism workshops and gender-based caucuses. More and more women were playing leading roles in the group, including facilitating meetings, developing our politics in group literature, recruiting and bringing in new members, representing FNB in coalitions, speaking at rallies, fielding questions by media, writing articles about FNB for the activist press, and coordinating actions and large meals for conferences and gatherings.

Praxis-Based Organizing and Building Democratic Structure

Through the process of addressing internal dynamics and taking steps to develop a broader understanding of our politics, the structure of SF FNB became more formalized, effective, and democratic. It didn't happen overnight, nor was there an endpoint at which we considered it "done." Rather, we had moved into a process of praxis-based organizing, in which we applied analysis to our practice, reflected on what we had done, and then developed stronger analysis to improve our practice.

Dealing with group dynamics led to discussions about power, privilege, and oppression, which helped us think about society more generally. In hindsight, however, I believe that we focused too narrowly on our own group at the expense of incorporating a more historical or institutional analysis of our society. This meant that we often personalized systemic relationships of power. At times, this also produced an approach that looked like this: "Get angry at the problem, attach blame for the problem, and create shame until you see change." A more effective approach would have been: "Understand the problem, formulate a different vision, and develop proactive strategies to get there." Despite these weaknesses, we were still evaluating our process and coming up with needed changes to help us meet our larger goals.

In a group focused on building democracy both internally and externally, this was an important step in moving away from informal, clique-based leadership. One strength of collective decision-making is that, at its best, it draws decisions out of a spectrum of perspectives and experiences, leading to deeper, more complex understandings. When a group's work is primarily evaluated by individuals or a small group, the latter's assumptions and perspectives limit discussion.

A broader process, incorporating all members, allows for a greater number of people to learn from each other. In this process, we build our understanding of different people's approaches to working for social justice. Group evaluation also helps build the overall capacity of individuals to work as a team towards shared short- and long-term goals. We began to incorporate evaluation into our work as a way to determine how successful we were. For example, working to bring feminism into SF FNB helped us recognize leadership roles and power relations in the group. We tried to

apply this recognition by developing conscious structures for sharing responsibilities and power, even though at first, it was often awkward, ineffective, or frustrating. We would list what needed to be done and then encourage (and sometimes push) people into roles they may not have been prepared for. We didn't always train or support people as they took on these roles, because in overemphasizing the idea of roles as tasks, we had stripped them of the skill sets, experiences, and political competencies necessary to do them well. Competency itself was a controversial concept. After all, who determines who is competent? We still lacked a language for describing how race, class, and gender privilege shape both dominant definitions of competency and the ways privileged people are socialized to meet those expectations. Because the concept was controversial, we often shied away from discussing it directly, even though most of us had our own (unstated) ways of determining competency in others. This, in turn, led to one-dimensional concepts of leadership; we naïvely assumed that anyone in the group could explain our politics just as well as anyone else, so we didn't practice or offer each other support. To think we should support other people to become competent seemed sexist, classist, racist, or problematic in some other way. Through reflecting on our own experience and studying other movements, we realized that we needed a more complex approach.

As we put these ideas into practice, we inevitably made mistakes along the way, and our understanding of the problem and potential solutions matured. We began to talk about the skills, experience, and support necessary to actually share responsibilities, and we experimented with ways to address these. We used a "buddy system" to teach different roles by pairing more-experienced with less-experienced people. We began to discuss our ideas about organizing versus activism—an activist as a person who comes to activities and an organizer as someone who is responsible for the activities.[24] Later, we talked about an FNB organizer as someone who also takes responsibility for designing activities to move our work towards our goals. In turn, this pushed us to develop explicit goals, something SF FNB had rarely ever done. With goals, we could then start to evaluate our work beyond our individual impressions, or merely counting how many people had shown up. This helped us develop a group process for measuring success.

Meanwhile, we began to believe that our informal structure was making the group more susceptible to being shaped by patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, and the state. Systemic power relations and this very lack of structure were undermining our efforts to address these problems. Structure is the manifestation of decisions or lack of decisions a group makes about how it will operate. Process refers to the ways that people then try to actually work together in those structures. The process is where ideas, structure, and people's real experiences converge. Process is always happening regardless of what kind of structure or lack of structure houses it. In a condition of structurelessness, blame often falls on individuals for any problems or unhealthy dynamics, but once these individuals leave a group, others often end up in a similar role. This can lead to people thinking that inequality is natural or unavoidable. Instead, we suggested that FNB must change its structures to create different kinds of power relations and organizational dynamics. However, we sometimes went too far in this, believing that we needed to make FNB a fully functional group with "everything figured out" before we could meaningfully engage in the world. To address this, some of us began arguing that we needed to make our organization into one that could proceed with external work while continuing to improve our internal dynamics.

Women's leadership was central to the process of strengthening democratic structure in the group. In addition to women who had been longtime members of SF FNB, a growing number of women had come to San Francisco after the UN50 gathering. Having already played leadership roles in other FNB groups, these women brought their skills and experience to SF FNB. Rahula Janowski had been part of Arcata FNB, which was a majority-women-led group with a reputation for its strong commitment to democratic process. Rahula, a white working-class anarchist raised in a countercultural commune in rural Vermont, brought her skills as a facilitator and her knowledge of consensus decision-making to help run our meetings. Together with Jeff Larson, who brought his years of experience as an anarchist and feminist leader in Long Beach FNB, Rahula led trainings in consensus for SF FNB. Camisha Ann Reidt, a young woman of color, moved to San Francisco from Riverside, California, where she and five friends, all in high school, had started an FNB chapter. In addition to becoming a regular facilitator at our meetings, Camisha also led several consensus trainings for

FNBers. She and Genevieve McGowan, another young woman of color, also worked closely with Johnna on the women's autonomous cookhouse, and the three of them developed consensus trainings for the group. In addition to concrete tools, these workshops explored our vision for a democratic society and focused on building democratic organizations with functional meetings and decision-making processes to advance our work. In these trainings, the democratic vision was rooted in anti-capitalism and anarchism, and function decision-making assumed a commitment to feminism. Hundreds of people went through these trainings that were held for members of SF FNB, activists in the broader Bay Area activist community, and for FNB activists from around the country.

The struggle against sexism thus opened space to further develop our politics and practice. While we didn't solve everything, we were experimenting as a group with how to make democracy and feminism real and meaningful in our day-to-day practice. One lesson we learned from this is that while the process of change is ongoing, it's necessary to create benchmarks and celebrate successes along the way. Otherwise, we neglect our successes and easily fall into a sense that nothing ever changes in the face of injustice. This leads to a fatalistic and often hopeless sense of what is possible. Indeed, at times it felt like we were trying to build a sandcastle, and that with each new wave of volunteers, the sandcastle was washed away because we had to start all over. Eventually, I began to realize that the most important thing wasn't the metaphorical sandcastle itself but the practice, skills, lessons, and experience we were gaining through building SF FNB and how we brought that into the world through our work. We were getting better at what we were doing, and we were learning to work together as a team to build a radically democratic culture and practice.

By 1997, we had developed a consistent approach to structure in SF FNB. We still had weekly consensus-based, general meetings open to the public. We asked new people to come early for a brief orientation to the group. We continued with the longstanding practice of having members explain our Three Principles. Over time, we also began to suggest that new people should focus on learning how the group worked rather than jump into decision-making. From 1996 to 1999, we had an average of two new people at every meeting, with attendance generally between ten and thirty people. We clarified that the general meeting was the primary space for

major decision-making. All proposals needed to go through the general meeting. Often these proposals empowered individuals or committees to move decisions forward. Those bodies would always remain accountable to the general meeting through report backs. The majority of people involved in the group didn't come to meetings, but participated in cookhouses, servings, and events. The key difference for these members of the group, was that there was now a clearer understanding of what the group stood for, how it operated, and how people could get involved in various aspects of the work.

This model of empowerment and accountability worked well for us as we developed a structure of committees, work groups, cookhouses, and "bottomliners." Standing work committees, like our finance, literature, and videography committees, along with ad hoc, project-based work groups, were open for all members to join. These were accountable to the general meeting, but they made their own decisions within their areas of work. They gave regular reports, and if someone disagreed with one of their decisions, this could be discussed in the general meeting. For projects beyond their day-to-day functions, committees developed proposals to present to the general meeting. Work groups planned events and actions on a case-by-case basis.[25] As a stronger culture of trust and accountability developed in the group, work groups were able to take more initiative.

Cookhouses still made their own day-to-day decisions within the general politics and work of the group. They could, for example decide autonomously to be women-only or alcohol-free. If a local social justice group called an emergency rally, FNBers at a given cookhouse could decide to serve food there, so long as they made enough to cover the regular community meal. Cookhouses could also decide to ask someone to leave or ban individuals for disrespectful behavior. This included sexist behavior or the creation of an antisocial environment through disruptive behavior, privacy invasions, stealing, and alcohol and drug abuse. That individual could protest being banned to a general meeting, but it was the banned person's responsibility to demonstrate why this was unfair, and individuals were asked to help with conflict mediation.

"Bottom-liners" were people who took responsibility for an individual project or an area of work, including recruiting and coordinating the

necessary volunteers. We had bottom-liners for tasks like regularly delivering ingredients like tofu or spices to each of the cookhouses, ordering more bicycle trailers for food transportation, or composting the hundreds of pounds of food scraps generated every week. Bottom-liners were expected to work within the general framework of FNB and were accountable for what they did. We also formalized the process of choosing members to represent the group in coalitions. Increased responsibility for representatives improved communication between coalitions and FNB.

Meeting facilitation rotated, and we practiced having two people facilitate together, so that less-experienced people could learn through teaming up with more-experienced people. One of the strengths of SF FNB's meetings was the standard agenda we used throughout the years, which provided a basic structure that we could adjust as needed. In addition to new agenda items covering orientation for new people and event planning, we made five other additions: group games, a summary of news and discussion on the international FNB e-mail list, report backs from cookhouses and solidarity servings, a brief check in on how the meeting was going, and an end-of-meeting recap of tasks people had volunteered to do in the coming week.

Through this process we were increasing our individual and collective capacities to act as a team. We were developing democratic and feminist structures within our group that could help us work towards building similar structures out in the world.

San Francisco Food Not Bombs and the Building of an Anarchist Left, 1995–2000

As we worked to strengthen our feminist and democratic practice in SF FNB, we continued to also build on the external work of the organization, including: group infrastructure, community meals and recruitment, solidarity work in the broader Left and the anarchist movement, economic justice campaigns, and the ongoing efforts to build the larger FNB movement. The group's internal and external work were, of course, always connected; each dynamically informed and shaped the other.

The Infrastructure of San Francisco Food Not Bombs

FNB was an all-volunteer group dependent on the resources of our members. Its existence was premised upon thousands of volunteer-hours. Working with SF FNB in this era, I knew very few paid organizers and would have had no idea what a "501c3" non-profit organization referred to. When we said "non-profit," we meant all-volunteer. A few members worked at the Coalition on Homelessness or other partially paid staff organizations, but FNBers tended to work in the service sector, at worker owned cooperatives, skilled trades, computer programming, and union jobs. Some worked workfare jobs and received welfare, some received disability relief; others were students with loans or help from parents, and some were retired.

Cookhouses continued to provide day-to-day infrastructure. Many of us lived in collective houses and apartments with other social justice activists. We were inspired by the Autonomous movement in Europe, particularly Germany, whose members occupied large abandoned buildings and turned them into vibrant social centers that housed thousands of people. These European activists lived together collectively as a way to integrate political struggle to change society with radical culture to shape everyday life. Through the 1990s, SF FNB members built strong relationships with German FNB activists who came out of the Autonomous movements and the related anti-fascist movement. In SF FNB, there were also some who had lived in countercultural communes in the 1960s and 1970s. At some houses, we only cooked once a week; others were FNB houses where we also held meetings for work groups and committees, hosted work parties and social events, and stored FNB equipment and supplies. Some were longstanding collectives like Urban Stonehenge, which had served as a hub for anti-nuclear activists in the early 1980s. Some, like Praxis House and the Asylum, formed as FNB houses. In one multi-unit Mission District building, four of the six apartments were FNB houses, and the basement became an FNB storage space.

For years, SF FNB meetings were held at Epicenter, a punk activist space in the Mission District. After Epicenter lost its space due to high rent increases, we began meeting in coffee shops and eventually at the Coalition office. Our food came from ten to fifteen health food stores and bagel shops. The worker-owned Rainbow Grocery Cooperative donated bulk rice and

beans every month along with extra bulk food and spices for FNB events. Before the widespread use of e-mail, FNB's main mode of communication was a voicemail line that members checked regularly to leave and get messages from one another and the whole group.

The relationships between people committed to shared values and common action was the driving force of the group. Most involved referred to it as the "FNB community" and this was reflected in the regular garden parties, music nights, FNB contingents at Critical Mass bike rides and in marches, fundraising parties, puppet shows, community celebrations after mass demonstrations, and birthday parties.

Community Meals and New Recruits

In the late 1990s, FNB was serving between 100 and 150 people every night at our community meals in United Nations Plaza. After President Clinton's "Welfare Reform" laws took effect in 1996, we noticed more poor women coming to get food. As the overall increase in economic violence impacted people's ability to survive, tension increased at servings. There were more fights, and FNBers needed to become skilled at de-escalation. We'd use humor to promote non-violence at the servings, passing out spoons while yelling, "Get your Non-Violent spoon!" Then, we'd switch it up, and say things like: "Get your Women's-Liberation, Queer-Liberation, Anti-Racist, Fuck-the-Cops, Down-with-Capitalism, Damn-I-hope-they-put-salt-in-that-soup … spoon!" This got people laughing while building a sense of community around FNB politics.

By this time, SF FNB's demographics had shifted to little overlap between FNB members and the people we served. While there continued to be a large working-class membership in SF FNB, there was an increase in middle-class members and fewer poor and homeless members in the group. In the past, we had thought of our struggle as "poor people vs. the Jordan administration." Now, with our former poorest members having moved on to work in other economic justice organizations, we faced a question: whom were we trying to organize? Some of us talked about a shift in focus towards recruiting people to act in solidarity with homeless people, using SF FNB as a way to move people into action around economic justice. We believed that since groups like the Coalition were organizing homeless people around

campaigns that supported their leadership, FNB needed to reach out to other populations to bring them into the movement.

Although we never reached a formal decision about whom we were organizing, some of us began recruiting more from schools we were attending, and generally from younger-generation subcultures. For instance, some FNBers with connections to the underground dance party scene began throwing benefit-raves for FNB, and these helped to bring in new volunteers. We increased our outreach to students and the activist community more broadly. We took up offers to talk at high schools and colleges about homelessness and economic justice. These efforts brought in young people and more middle-class people. In general, most of us actively recruited every chance we could get. It wasn't hard to do. There was a high level of interest in working with the group, we interacted with hundreds of people at our servings and public events regularly, and we had very concrete ways to bring people instantly into the group. We were also growing in numbers as more people moved to San Francisco specifically to join FNB. Frequently, these were people who'd been active with FNB in their hometowns, and they arrived with experience. Additionally, hundreds of activists traveled through San Francisco and worked with us for periods ranging from a few days to several months. These travelers often stayed at FNB houses while they were in town. All in all, hundreds of people came through SF FNB, many leaving with stronger commitments to justice. From 1996 through the early 2000s, we served nightly dinners and two lunches each week. One lunch serving, which had been running since 1988, was in Golden Gate Park. Most of the people we served there were kids who had run away from home or were on the road traveling; many were queer and had been kicked out, and many had fled violent homes. The other regular lunch serving was in the Mission District. We wanted to connect the community meals to issues of gentrification, so we served in the heart of the Mission where gentrification was on the march. We tried to coordinate our meal with the community-based organization Mission Agenda, which organized low-income tenants. Our plan was that Mission Agenda could do outreach while we served. In 1998, we also served a third lunch in the Lower Haight neighborhood, after members of the Saint John Coltrane African Orthodox Church suggested that we join forces.[26] Their church was based in

the poor and working-class Black community in the area and they joined their church banner and FNB banner at servings.

Building Solidarity in the Broader Movement

Solidarity between and with poor people and working-class people was central to the politics and practice of FNB. This translated into a practice of working with and supporting a wide range of organizations. Our overarching belief was that, by working with diverse groups like unions, community organizations, local artists, national campaigns, and coalitions, the issues facing homeless people would be connected to the struggles of working people, low-income families, prisoners, and many others. Through these connections, we believed we could build a broad, multi-issue movement for economic justice.[27]

As part of our commitment to solidarity, we often brought food to protests and events. From 1995 to 2000, we served an average of four solidarity meals per week. Often, we'd just make extra soup and pick up extra bagels. But if it was a big event, a conference, or something special, we would prepare separate meals for the occasion. We had broad criteria for groups with whom we wanted to be in solidarity. Generally speaking, we wanted to support anyone working for economic, social, environmental or racial justice.[28] If we were asked to support a group or action by serving food, we usually said yes. If we said no, it was due to our capacity. In the case of big events, we had to prioritize what we thought would be most strategic, but we still took on a lot of them. When we teamed up with East Bay FNB to serve several thousand brownbag lunches at the founding conference of Critical Resistance in 1998, we developed a Statement of Solidarity. This Statement, included in every lunch, was a good summary of our solidarity politics. Under the heading "Solidarity Good Enough to Eat," it read:

> We are excited to be part of Critical Resistance. We believe that the formation of coalitions and alliances around many different struggles will help build movements capable of challenging inequality and social violence in all of its manifestations. Since all of the major systems of oppression are interlocking, we believe that our collective liberation depends on the interlocking of our struggles for social

> change. Let us break bread and organize together; for a world that creates neither the jailed nor the jailer.

We were busy, for sure, but were we effective? We contributed labor to the broader Left and prepared hundreds of thousands of meals to support the work of hundreds of groups. We saved organizations tens of thousands of dollars in food expenses, and provided an entry point into social justice work for hundreds of people. Our efforts were rooted in a profound love for the movement and a bedrock conviction that we needed mutual aid to win. Many of us believed strongly in the importance of sharing food as a way to sustain and build a culture of solidarity. We had other goals as well, like building relationships with organizations. But our success was mixed—we had different ideas of how best to accomplish these goals.

Some FNBers felt that providing food was enough. However, others wanted FNB to play an active role in building coalitions and bring our politics into the larger movement by helping shape strategy. We wanted FNB members to help develop the politics and goals of the events we took part in, where appropriate. This occasionally happened, but more often our role was only to provide the food. Furthermore, while we frequently wanted to build relationships with these organizations, we were generally so overwhelmed by the logistics of food preparation that we dropped the conversations we had planned to have with event organizers. Overall, we had a good orientation towards supporting a broad movement, but we spread ourselves thin, and lacked follow-up to build relationships. Without priorities about whom and what to support, we frequently overcommitted and exhausted ourselves.

During this time, we also experimented with efforts to take our solidarity work in a new direction. In 1995, a group of SF FNBers decided they wanted to do ongoing solidarity work with a group organizing in the Mission District, the working-class Latino/a neighborhood in which many of us lived. They approached AYUDA (later known as Housing Not Borders), a group led by formerly homeless Latino/a immigrants to fight for housing and civil rights. Collaboratively, they developed a plan for FNB to prepare a weekly meal for day laborers on César Chávez Street.[29] While FNB served food, AYUDA did outreach. This became an effective way for AYUDA to build their membership. The César Chávez serving was a joint project for the next three years until AYUDA was able to take it over

entirely. This was a radically different approach to solidarity. By building an ongoing program, FNB was able to support the development of a poor people's economic justice organization, which could then provide leadership in the fight for housing, worker, and immigrant rights.

Another SF FNB effort to act in solidarity with day laborers further illustrated the importance of partnering with community organizations led by poor and working-class people of the community in which we were working. In 1998, a group of us began serving food on César Chávez Street. The police and the INS had been harassing day laborers, and we wanted to demonstrate our solidarity. However, this time we didn't team up with a community organization and only had a few beginning-level Spanish speakers at the meals. Most of the day laborers assumed we were a church group giving out charity rather than a political organization working in solidarity for immigrant worker power. Within a year, we ended this serving. As one of the main proponents of the serving, I didn't understand the critical distinction between supporting an immigrant worker-led group like Housing Not Borders to build its membership and an FNB serving that was virtually undistinguishable from charity.

Drawing lessons from these efforts, a group of newer SF FNBers built relationships with the Day Labor Program (DLP), an organization founded by poor and working-class Latino/a immigrants to fight for civil rights and economic justice. Clare Bayard represented SF FNB in an alliance with a related project called INS Watch, which worked to pass and enforce legislation prohibiting local law enforcement from collaborating with federal immigration authorities (known as the "Sanctuary City" ordinance). INS Watch and the DLP also brought together immigrant organizers statewide to work for immigrant rights. Clare was a white middle-class activist from Delaware with roots in feminist and queer organizing, and she worked to connect SF FNB in the late 1990s to economic justice struggles led by immigrants of color. Throughout this organizing, Clare talked with the DLP about opportunities for FNB to support their work by providing food at their events. DLP leaders agreed to this, but continued providing their own food for several months in case FNB fell through. Over time, FNB members built a solid relationship by being consistent and following through on commitments. At first, some FNBers had been frustrated that we had prepared food that wasn't needed. However, they soon realized that the

relationship was more important than the food. They also realized that activists of color have often had a long history with white activists falling through on commitments.

Eventually, FNB was frequently asked to cook for DLP membership meetings, actions, and holiday meals. FNB members also got involved in DLP campaigns to end police and INS harassment of day laborers, and to win a DLP-run hiring hall against the objections of racist neighbors. FNB and DLP built a strong alliance in 1999 that continued to grow stronger. Clare and others talked explicitly about the fact that FNB members were mostly white U.S. citizens, while the DLP's members and staff were mostly immigrants of color, and that this was a way of doing anti-racist work to build working-class power. FNB's work with the DLP built off of the experience of working with AYUDA/Housing Not Borders, and took it further in two important ways. First, a strategic position based in class analysis and anti-racism was put forward to provide longer-term goals to guide the work. Second, in addition to providing food support, FNB members were actively getting involved in community organizing campaigns for immigrant rights.

In addition to building relationships, another goal of solidarity servings was the political development of SF FNB members. Solidarity servings helped new volunteers learn FNB politics through practical experience. People who had never heard of political prisoners would serve at events about them. People who had come into the group because they wanted to feed hungry people went to events about corporate power and learned about anti-capitalist politics. These servings provided opportunities for political conversations between new and existing members. Through exposure to some many different issues and organizations, many FNBers went on to join a wide variety of social justice organizations in the Bay Area and around the United States.

Building the Anarchist Movement in the Bay Area

In addition to the broader social justice Left, SF FNB worked specifically to build the anarchist movement in the Bay Area. In the 1990s, North American anarchist organizing was on the rise. One key starting point was the Zapatista uprising, which won international attention on January 1,

1994, the day the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect. They ignited our imaginations with a political analysis rooted in over five hundred years of resistance to colonialism, a strategy that declared war on neoliberalism, and a call for a democratic process of making revolutionary social change. The anarchist newspaper *Love and Rage* translated and published each Zapatista communiqué along with interviews and analysis. The inspiration we got from the Zapatistas was pivotal for the growing anti-authoritarian Left.

In 1996, over six hundred anarchist activists from around the country gathered in Chicago for a conference entitled Active Resistance (AR), dedicated to building the capacity of the anarchist movement. There were three tracks of workshops and discussions: Cooperatives, Collectives, and Alternative Economics; Community Organizing; and Building Revolutionary Movements. Each of these tracks helped participants develop skills and insights to bring back to their communities. AR was a significant step forward as it pushed anarchists to think more ambitiously and strategically about the kinds of organizations, institutions, and movements we need in order to build a free society.

Inspired by AR, Bay Area anarchists put together a conference in the spring of 1997 called "Building a Community of Resistance." Like AR, it tried to push both strategic thinking about how to build the Bay Area movement and concrete planning about moving that strategy forward. This was a break from the model typical of previous anarchist gatherings, which were based around sharing skills, not formulating strategy. SF and East Bay FNB members participated in the conference and provided food. During this time, SF FNB hosted Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, a former Black Panther who was working to build the anarchist movement through a combination of anti-racist political education and community organizing skills building. We organized multiple speaking events, including at the "Building a Community of Resistance" conference. Coming out of these experiences, SF FNB stepped up our role in building an explicitly anarchist movement as an anti-authoritarian pole in the broader Left in the Bay Area. Lorenzo encouraged us to develop a stronger understanding of white supremacy and do more to support anarchists of color in the movement.

One of the projects that came out of the conference was the Bay Area Anti-Authoritarian Networking monthly meeting. The first of these,

attended by about seventy-five people, was both painful and profoundly instructive, akin to a bad play about the existential dilemma of anarchism: how do we democratically propose anything without a democratic structure already in existence by which to do so? How do we take initiative and make things happen without being authoritarian? The AR conference itself had been plagued with this problem, and we were revisiting it in this meeting. The planning committee for the meeting created only a very loose agenda. None of the participants came with prepared proposals to give direction or purpose to the meetings, because everyone feared being perceived as authoritarian. With little direction, and a group in which many people didn't know one another well, the conversation went in circles. Conversation focused almost entirely on the potential process this project could have, with almost no talk about politics or purpose.

Keith Hennessy, a queer performance artist and longtime anarchist organizer, finally spoke directly to the dilemma we faced. He said we needed to break out of these patterns and develop a practice of "anti-authoritarian leadership," and he encouraged people to step up to this challenge. These comments resonated deeply with many of us, particularly those of us who were defining ourselves more and more as organizers.

For many of us in the anarchist community, anarchist politics codified opposition to authoritarianism into a practical distrust and suspicion of anyone taking initiative. This often led to mediocrity celebrated as equality or a vicious cycle of critiquing leaders. Furthermore, we lacked a culture of training and support to help people step up. Distrust of initiative, combined with a fear of being perceived as authoritarian, led to an unsupportive and demoralizing group culture. Many anarchists wrote about their politics in zines and screamed about them in punk bands, but far fewer put forward analysis based in a practice of building long-lasting organizations and engaging in community struggles to win systemic change. By putting forward the concept of anti-authoritarian leadership. Hennessy pointed to an exciting new way of understanding power.[30] SF FNBers like Rahula Janowski and John Viola played leading roles in the Bay Area Anti-Authoritarian Network's Planning Committee throughout its ten-month existence. The bimonthly meeting was, according to its mission statement, "part of an ongoing network of activists and organizers engaged in struggles,

projects, and groups that use non-hierarchical methods to work towards building anarchist community and creating positive social transformation." With FNB providing dinner, each meeting featured presentations by groups or projects to share insights from their history or updates about upcoming work. This strengthened relationships between anarchists engaged in community struggles and inspired a number of collaborations.

During this period, Praxis House played a leading role in SF FNB's work to build the anarchist movement. Praxis was an FNB cookhouse explicitly committed to anarchist politics and to aiding the larger movement. Its founding roommate-members had each worked previously with other FNB chapters in California: Tai Miller with Santa Cruz FNB, Jeff Larson at Long Beach FNB, and I with Whittier FNB. Along with six other FNB houses, we hosted meetings, work parties, special events, and extra cookhouses; housed out of town activists; and served as a base of ongoing FNB activity. Other FNB members of Praxis included Heather Whitney, Rahula Janowski, John Haywood, Clare Bayard, Catrina Roallas, and Lauren Rosa. Praxis House was committed to being majority-women, and everyone was expected to play active roles in FNB.

We encouraged the formation of majority-women work-groups, took on roles to build the organization, and prioritized coalition building with other anarchist groups. While most of the FNB membership was deeply involved in anarchist movement building work, I note Praxis House both because of its particular role and because of its centrality in my own political development.[31]

SF FNB began organizing anarchist contingents for marches and hosted periodic "Anarchist Cafés." The contingents were opportunities to build a community around radical politics and practice our organizing. Our first anarchist contingent was at a "Fight the Right" march organized by the National Organization of Women (NOW). We called for another anarchist contingent in March for the first October 22nd National Day of Action Against Police Brutality. SF FNB was a founding member of the October 22nd Coalition, and we put out a call to FNB groups in the United States and Canada to organize protests against police brutality. San Francisco FNB was also part of the Bay Area Free Mumia Abu-Jamal coalition, and we called for several contingents in these marches as well. We regularly

organized anarchist contingents of two to three hundred people at marches in San Francisco between 1996 and 1999.

We organized these contingents for two main reasons: 1) we were frustrated by the marginalization we experienced from the many march organizers who were sectarian Marxist; and 2) we wanted to make our politics visible and increase the organization of anarchists in the Bay Area. We intentionally did not call for black blocs and discouraged people from wearing masks; we aimed to create a friendly and inviting space where many people could come together.

We had some success with these contingents, but we decided to stop organizing them because we saw that they were bringing together a particular constituency of young white punks who were unconnected to ongoing political organizing. The majority of the anarchists in our networks, including most of those in SF FNB, didn't fit this description and didn't fit in culturally (even though most were white). They often felt alienated by the contingents. Furthermore, we were doing most of our political work in broader progressive groups that were composed of many political backgrounds, not just anarchism. We were working on economic, racial, environmental, and social justice issues, and we wanted to link anarchists to those struggles in order to build the broader Left as opposed to building a marginal anarchist subculture.

To help us bring together a more diverse community, we focused our energy on the Anarchist Cafés. Once or twice each year we'd bring together three to six hundred people for a night of food, music, performances, and dancing. The Cafés brought together a multi-generational anarchist community as well as people from the broader anti-authoritarian Left. In arranging music for the Cafés, we chose to consciously move against the dominance of the punk subculture in anarchism. Instead of booking punk bands, we invited spoken-word poets, a cappella groups, and a range of other musical acts, along with DJs for an outdoor dance area. We prioritized women, queers, and people of color as performers and speakers. We held the Cafés at a beautiful soup kitchen that had been founded as part of the Catholic Worker movement. We used the Cafés to highlight organizing efforts that anarchists were involved in, such as anti-gentrification, prisoner support, and anti-police brutality. Each Café raised money for an

organization like the Coalition on Homelessness or the Prisoners Literature Project.

In publicizing the Cafés, SF FNB communicated our politics to the anti-authoritarian Left. As we said in our outreach materials, "the Anarchist Café is a celebration of our movement for economic, social, and environmental justice. The Café aims to help strengthen and build community between activists, and to help us maintain our commitment to working for liberation while having a damn good time." Simultaneously, we promoted anarchism as "a political theory and organizing practice which seeks to dismantle patriarchy, white supremacy, capitalism, and authoritarianism, and works towards ecological sustainability, self-determination, solidarity, and cooperation." We did this to emphasize the struggles against white supremacy and patriarchy and to focus on anarchism as a political movement rather than a lifestyle or "scene."

We conducted five significant experiments through Cafés. First, we prioritized women's involvement in the planning committees. We identified roles to fill, made special note of all public speaking responsibilities, created coordinator positions, and then prioritized women for these roles by asking them directly rather than asking for volunteers in the full group meetings. Our second experiment focused on public recognition of leadership. Men generally received far more credit for the work they did than women. We made badges shaped like black stars that read "Organizer," and gave one to every coordinator and member of the planning committee to wear. We wanted people to understand themselves as organizers, to help them have confidence providing leadership, and for them to receive recognition for their work. We also wanted to challenge the anti-organizing position of some anarchists who believe that social change happens spontaneously. Our third experiment involved community recognition of movement veterans. We gave framed certificates of appreciation "for a life in struggle" to a number of movement elders. We did this to honor our elders and to move towards a culture of recognition and appreciation. We saw this as a way to build intergenerational movement, to lift up people who serve as role models, and to express love for those who take initiative and inspire us.

Our fourth experiment was to prioritize anarchists of color who wanted to perform and to ask organizers of color from organizations we respected to speak about their political work. The majority of people who came to

Anarchist Cafés were white. Therefore, when we asked activists of color to talk about their work, we tried to explain that we wanted the mostly white anarchist community to learn about and support that work. We invited radical poets and performers of color with whom we already had relationships. We explained to these speakers and performers that the space would be majority-white, and that our goal in inviting them was to help expand the politics of the Café. In addition, we also prioritized anti-racist white people who could contribute their political ideas through poetry or song.

To help us meet this objective, a couple of us went to two elders for help. We talked with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, a longtime movement activist from a white working-class background, who helped launch the women's liberation movement, and Elizabeth 'Betita' Martínez, a veteran of the Civil Rights and Chicano Power movements. We explained that we wanted to deepen the feminist and anti-racist politics in the anarchist community, and the cultural shifts we wanted to make through the Cafés. Roxanne and Betita gave us encouragement, agreed to become regular speakers at the Café, and helped us connect to other people in the community. Additionally, we had someone from the planning committee speak at the Café explicitly about our goals to help build an anti-racist, feminist anarchist movement engaged in community struggles.

Finally, to help us be more effective, our fifth experiment was incorporating two new components into the planning process of the Cafés: group goal-setting and evaluation. Goal-setting helped us collectively discuss the reasons and purpose for what we were doing, rather than just a couple of people operating from a larger vision. This way everyone was able to work together as a team to accomplish goals we all understood. Evaluation opened space for collective reflection on what worked and what didn't and gave us a chance to collectively learn from our experience and apply those lessons to future efforts.

Our goals were primarily about developing an anti-racist, feminist politics within the anarchist community, moving anarchists to engage in broader social justice struggles, highlighting and encouraging a pro-organizing and pro-movement building approach in anarchist activism, supporting women's leadership and supporting the visible participation and leadership of the small-but-growing number of people of color in anarchist

circles. We were moderately successful in accomplishing these goals. We did raise political consciousness, and the Café became an important gathering for people to come together and build community.

Overall, we made important shifts within a growing section of the larger anarchist movement that understood itself as part of a larger social justice Left working to transform society, rather than a countercultural community working to be an alternative on the margins of society.

Economic Justice Campaigns and Projects, 1997–1999

From 1996 to 2000, FNB joined and initiated several key economic justice campaigns and projects. During this period, the federal and city governments were cutting money for affordable housing and services year after year, and rich developers were making San Francisco's housing market one of the most expensive in the country. As a result, home-lessness and evictions framed most of the fights we took up.

In 1996, the Clinton administration succeeded in ending "welfare as we know it," with welfare rights organizations around the country fighting back. A broad campaign, with leadership from the Kensington Welfare Rights Union in Philadelphia and the Women's Economic Agenda Project and Food First in Oakland, put forward the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a standard for the United States. There were national bus tours focused on economic human rights, congressional hearings on welfare reform, and grassroots fights by low-wage worker groups at the local level. SF FNB joined in this campaign by doing outreach, providing food at rallies and marches, doing media work, and recruiting homeless people to testify at hearings. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, especially its sections on economic human rights, became central in our messaging.[32]

After Clinton's welfare reform legislation passed, several members of FNB began meeting again with Housing Not Borders to initiate a community kitchen. Since the new law denied social services to many families, particularly immigrants, Housing Not Borders developed a plan modeled on similar projects throughout Latin America. The idea was to secure a central location where families could come together to make community meals. FNB would focus on securing food sources and funds, and Housing Not Borders would focus on organizing interested Latino/a

immigrant families to staff the kitchen. After months of work, we secured a location and got the kitchen up and running, albeit briefly. The plan had been that once the project was securely in the hands of community members, Housing Not Borders and FNB would withdraw. However, due to a lack of funding, the project wasn't sustainable for very long. Still, it represented an important development in FNB. This was an alliance with an immigrant-led organization to build an alternative institution that would be run by the Latino/a immigrant community itself.

During this time, the military decommissioned its base in San Francisco's Presidio district. The future of the land was unclear, but many believed that it would eventually be transferred to wealthy developers. The Presidio had 1,900 vacant homes, most of which were in good condition, yet they were scheduled for demolition. HNJ and Religious Witness with Homeless People launched a major fight to reserve this housing for homeless people. The overall plan was to make the housing affordable for mixed incomes with a portion of the units guaranteed for homeless people. Religious Witness gathered support for the campaign from over 3,000 people and 250 organizations. Beginning in 1994, HNJ did several high-profile "public takeovers" in the Presidio, which galvanized support within the economic justice community. Religious Witness united leaders and communities from diverse faiths to hold a dozen demonstrations, each including civil disobedience. In total there were over three hundred arrests.[33] As the campaign gained momentum during 1998, Religious Witness and HNJ pressured the mayor and the SF Board of Supervisors to pass a supporting resolution, and Religious Witness put forward a citywide ballot initiative, Proposition L.[34] SF FNB regularly participated in these actions, and we made housing for homeless people in the Presidio one of our key demands. At the height of the campaign, HNJ did a large-scale takeover with over thirty people arrested. SF FNB members formed two of the six affinity groups risking arrest, in addition to providing food and turning out dozens of people to the rally.

In the end, the Presidio housing campaign had mixed success. Proposition L passed, and the housing was saved from demolition, but the affordable housing was marketed to students and denied to homeless people. Thus, the campaign won a victory on the political level but was largely

defeated in implementation. Yet over the course of the campaign thousands of people and hundreds of organizations were brought into the struggle and many were exposed to direct action for the first time. The campaign brought different communities and sectors of the movement together in powerful and effective ways with many people continuing to work for economic justice after the campaign ended.

Similar class struggles emerged in the Castro, a neighborhood that was a stronghold for San Francisco's gay liberation organizing in the 1970s, and has since become home to an overwhelmingly white and middle-class gay male community. Class tensions erupted in the late 1990s as many Castro residents protested against a planned homeless shelter for queer youth. Tommi Avicolli Mecca, a longtime queer radical working-class organizer, co-founded the shelter and led a public struggle to support it. Meanwhile, signs denouncing panhandlers appeared in shop windows in the Castro. The person distributing the signs was the owner of a store called Hot Cookie. Deke Nihilson, a working-class queer organizer in the IWW and FNB, proposed that FNB take this on as an anti-gentrification fight. Deke and Maura Dykstra, a middle-class sixteen-year-old raised in SF, teamed up to launch the campaign. In a joint IWW-FNB effort, they served a weekly meal in front of Hot Cookie or at nearby Harvey Milk Plaza. The serving was a protest calling for affordable housing to amplify a working-class Left queer analysis in the debate.

The anti-panhandling signs not only stayed up but more appeared in the Castro and other neighborhoods. The serving successfully encouraged public debate in the queer press and FNB played a key role in the discussion. Throughout the campaign the IWW and FNB provided food and support to the homeless community in the Castro. Direct outreach was also done to service workers in the neighborhood connecting poverty and the need for a living wage. However, our efforts failed to turn the tide.

In 1998, Mayor Brown's administration increased the number of citations for sleeping in public parks and reinitiated police sweeps of homeless people. Brown declared that police would enforce the curfew at Golden Gate Park and arrest people for camping. Three days later, we responded with a press conference and rally to announce a vigil and "sleep-out" action with the slogan "Break the Curfew." These actions slowed police sweeps, but didn't end them. The Brown administration escalated by fencing

in areas of United Nations Plaza where FNB served. UN Plaza was a congregation point for homeless people, and they regularly complained about both increased police sweeps and the new fences. Because the actions in Golden Gate Park had suffered from a lack of planning, we spent two months planning an action for UN Plaza. The action took place on the last day of the 1998 FNB Western Regional Gathering, hosted in San Francisco. Framing the issue as a fight for the rights of poor people to be in public space, the rally speakers included representatives from the Coalition on Homelessness, members of several FNB groups, and Food First. As the rally concluded, FNBers tore down the fences. We had spread the word about what was happening in advance, and warned everyone that the police would be arresting people for civil disobedience. Despite the warning, most of the homeless people stayed for the rally and cheered as the fences come down.

We got favorable media coverage in the progressive press, and the fences were officially removed. We felt like we had won a victory. Over time, however, we questioned what we had actually accomplished. The fences were down, but the police sweeps continued.[35] This was the same problem we had had with the Castro serving: we were putting forward concrete solutions, but they were long-term demands, and we were not developing campaigns in order to move towards those demands. Moreover, while we had a media message, we were unable to reframe the public debate on our terms. The mainstream press presented us as defenders of obscene and violent public behavior of primarily homeless men living in parks and on the street. Our protests had set us up for this interpretation. We were not highlighting the hundreds of families of women and children who were homeless, but often in shelters, moving from living room to living room of friends and family, or living in vehicles. Most of the homeless people who spoke at our press conferences and rallies were, in fact, single men, and the broader homeless population was often absent from our message. We were getting caught up in a reactionary cycle of opposition to the actions of the mayor's office, and the logic of capitalism rather than economic justice set the terms of debate.

During this period of frustration with our FNB efforts, the Biotic Baking Brigade (BBB) emerged. The BBB was not part of SF FNB, but some members were involved and FNB provided a base of support when people were arrested. Started by longtime members of Earth First!, the BBB used

humor and savvy media skills to bring attention to environmental and social justice issues. They threw pies in the faces of key political and corporate leaders and released humorous communiqués which were well-covered in the mainstream media. In 1998, BBB activists pied neoliberal economist Milton Friedman, Monsanto CEO Robert Shapiro, City Supervisor Gavin Newsom, and then-Mayor Willie Brown in San Francisco. This last action generated especially widespread media coverage. The BBB communiqué declared that it was in protest of police sweeps of homeless people and the lack of affordable housing. The pie throwers were arrested, including longtime FNBer Rahula Janowski, whose collarbone was broken when a Brown supporter tackled her. During the trial, the BBB used interviews, press conferences, and court testimony to keep the media's attention on the criminalization of poor people and the lack of housing. They highlighted the campaigns of the Coalition on Homelessness, and creatively used humor to bring media attention to poverty in the city.[36]

Meanwhile, FNBers were developing other creative actions. During the Presidio takeover in 1997, the core organizers of the action had formed an anarchist "cluster" of affinity groups. This collection used a form of organization called a "spokescouncil," and was committed to using creative direct-action tactics to reinvigorate street protests. A cluster is like an "affinity group of affinity groups." SF FNB members, mostly from Praxis House, formed an affinity group to make up the Black Sheep Action Cluster. Most of the other members of Black Sheep were East Bay anarchists. One of the affinity groups, Art and Revolution, called for a major effort to "Reclaim May Day" in 1998. May 1 of that year saw a large-scale march incorporating street theatre, large puppets, dance, music, and food, and brought together economic and social-justice organizations to honor the tradition of working-class resistance embodied in the Haymarket martyrs.[37] With the help of Art and Revolution, groups performed street theatre about gentrification and about the idea that working people can struggle for shorter hours to have more "time in their lives for living." Reclaim May Day continued for the next three years. It helped us to envision the kind of creative marches—using art and street theatre as a way to occupy and hold the streets—that we would use in Seattle in 1999. In fact, many of the Bay Area activists involved with Reclaim May Day played leading roles in the

Seattle WTO mass actions. In addition to our work in the Bay Area, we continued our efforts to build the larger FNB movement. Towards the late 1990s, the issues of accountability and leadership within SF FNB would become more pressing within the overall FNB movement as well.

Building the Food Not Bombs Movement and Internal Accountability

In the late 1990s, SF FNB continued to play a leading role within the broader FNB movement. We distributed literature, documentaries, and books to people across the globe. Meanwhile, hundreds of activists from around the world came to San Francisco and worked with us.[38] We often had conversations about the state of the larger FNB movement and how to build it. When other chapters had problems with city governments, we offered solidarity, connecting people to lawyers and reporters. Other chapters played this role as well.[39] Many organized regional FNB gatherings in Europe, Canada and the United States.

With SF FNB playing this leading role, a challenging relationship developed between SF FNB and co-founder Keith McHenry. The internal fights over money, discussed above, had led to tension between Keith and some members of the group. When SF FNB made the decision to cut back on servings and deal with internal issues of sexism and democracy, Keith believed the group was making a major mistake and began working more as an individual. The action-to-action approach he embraced clashed with our growing praxis-based organizing approach. We wanted to be more strategic and deliberate. We saw too many mistakes made by endlessly going from one action to the next with no evaluation and little attention to building the leadership of other members.

Starting in 1996, following the internal conflict over the finances, Keith worked more and more independently and focused on building the larger FNB movement. In 1997, Keith launched the "UnFree Trade Tour" through the United States and Canada. The plan was to hold events in fifty-eight cities with Keith talking about global capitalism, anti-militarism, and FNB. Three anti-poverty organizers from a Spanish group called Baladre were invited to go on the tour and present on the growing European movements against corporate globalization. The main relationship between FNB and

Baladre was through Hugh Mejia of SF FNB. When SF FNB decided we did not want to be responsible for such an ambitious, difficult project, Hugh helped organize the tour independently. The tour was a logistical mess from the start. The U.S. FNBers spoke only English and the Baladre organizers only Spanish. The translator for the tour cancelled at the last minute and the organizers couldn't find a replacement. Unsurprisingly, communication was a constant problem, and tensions flared. Near the end of the tour, Keith and the Baladre organizers could no longer tolerate one another and split ways. Several FNB groups who were at the end of the tour scrambled to get housing and transportation for Baladre members, and help them deal with new arrangements to get back to Spain. SF FNB stepped up to help.

SF FNB united in our concern about Keith's organizing style. For many of us, this called for creating a higher level of internal organization and accountability for our work and for caution regarding any future collaboration with Keith. However, for Hugh, the distress was deeply personal. He had built the relationships with Baladre, worked on the tour, and generally focused his work in SF FNB on developing relationships with other organizations locally, nationally, and internationally. Hugh launched a campaign to expel Keith from SF FNB and denounced him throughout the FNB movement. Most of us believed that this was excessive and that instead we should focus on developing clearer guidelines of accountability within SF FNB and then share these with other groups. Furthermore, many of us thought Keith played an important role in FNB and deserved more appreciation and respect for his efforts, even if we had critiques. Many of us also believed that the primary issues were based on a lack of clear strategy, rather than conflicts with and between individuals.

Our crisis was brought about by the broad question of accountability in the FNB movement. Like all activists, we were up against powerful social systems, having profound difficulties maintaining a sense of possibility in the face of brutality and injustice. In FNB, we saw poor people slowly dying on the streets of San Francisco and felt a tremendous call to respond. We threw ourselves against the policies of the state, in some cases literally. We had little in the way of training, resources, infrastructure, and mentorship from older organizers. We often had a narrow conception of who the movement was, which limited our allies and community. Mental illness and drug addiction affected both FNB and the homeless community, yet few of

us had any skills to deal with them. The international Left was in disarray, with most of us completely rejecting and alienated from the Marxist tradition, and we searched for lessons from past movements usually without guidance. The instant-gratification culture of U.S. consumer capitalism made it profoundly difficult for most of us to think about our work even one year in the future, and an attitude of "just do it" prevailed that burned us out. We developed collective tunnel vision: our differences were exaggerated, our issues magnified, and our options limited. This put us in an unhealthy position for dealing with our own limitations and those of others.

Shortly after the "UnFree Trade Tour," with tension growing between him and most of SF FNB, Keith McHenry quietly left the Bay Area. Sadly, there was no resolution of the issues, let alone a goodbye party.[40] Hugh pulled together an Accountability Committee to further investigate the mistakes made on the tour. This seemed like a straightforward process: we knew most of the details and we agreed that future efforts needed far more planning and a general respect for relationships with other organizations. But amid these debates, a much bigger question about accountability in a decentralized movement of autonomous chapters emerged: if individuals or groups in FNB took action or acted in ways that violated our principles or undermined our efforts, how could we hold each other accountable? Who decides what constitutes a violation? Most of us thought that we needed to help strengthen local groups, promote anti-racist and feminist politics, promote responsible movement building organizing, and deal with these kinds of situations on a case-by-case basis. Given that the understanding and mechanisms for accountability were lacking in the FNB movement, we believed that we needed to promote these concepts and create opportunities for people to share lessons and mechanisms. In 1998, SF FNB set out to take this on. And yet we faced a difficult question: how could we do this when most FNB groups didn't have empowered representatives, let alone agreement about whether or not they have standing membership?

We decided that we would work for a higher level of organization and culture of accountability in the FNB movement. There were now over two hundred FNB chapters around the world, and FNB gatherings were taking place in Europe, Canada, and regionally in the United States. We believed that organization needed to come from the bottom up and we thought that

as groups engaged in the work, they would develop politically, learn skills, and grow more competent to take on bigger projects. This was the experience of SF FNB. We also thought that increased communication between groups about politics and practice was a necessary step in this process. To assist with this, SF FNB developed a proposal to host an FNB Western Regional Gathering, mentioned above in the Presidio housing struggle. We presented this proposal to other FNB groups to get their input and see if they supported such an effort. We didn't think every group needed to agree before something could be done, but we believed that consulting others was a good step towards coordination and accountability. With support from over a dozen groups, we moved forward.

The theme of the gathering was "Organizing for Radical Social Change." Our goal was to build stronger FNB groups, highlight work beyond serving food, and promote skills, lessons, and campaigns to help groups get more organized. This was a shift from the FNB 1995 gathering, which had been a smorgasbord of different kinds of activism. Our new outlook concerned how the various FNB groups could strategically work together and in the broader movement. Bringing together over a hundred people, the gathering was noticeably different from the 1995 event to which people mostly came as individuals; in 1998 they came in groups and as members of local chapters. The gathering had a strong focus on groups sharing lessons from their work in their communities. The gathering met our goals of building local groups' capacities, but it also made it clear that efforts to build higher levels of coordination and accountability between groups wasn't realistic and most people simply didn't see a need for it. Communication and coordination between groups was based primarily on specific projects. A growing national FNB e-mail list increased communication between groups, but most were struggling to serve meals regularly and accomplish their local work.

Many thought issues of movement-wide accountability were interesting, but hardly pressing. This was a hard pill for some to swallow. People like Hugh had a vision of FNB as playing a leading role in a national economic justice movement, providing vision and direction, and were devastated by the limitations. Others of us began to accept the limitations and decided to focus on FNB's strengths. One of those strengths was FNB's ability to be a gateway for thousands of people in rural areas, small towns, suburbs, and

cities to engage in social justice work and become part of a larger movement for systemic change. FNB had the ability to change lives, and so the role of an FNB organizer was to support people in their political development, help them gain skills, help them see themselves as in it for the long haul, and encourage them to go on into other groups and campaigns when they were ready. However, we also believed that while people in FNB, the group should engage in strategic and effective work to win real changes and build large-scale movements for justice. This became our focus.

Mayor Brown Moves Against Food Not Bombs and the Bay Area Economic Justice Movement Grows Stronger, 1999–2000

By the end of the 1990s, San Francisco's Mission District was the epicenter of gentrification in the country. Landlords were evicting huge numbers of working-class tenants in order to raise rents. Gentrification is the process by which an area of town (usually pretty rundown because of a previous period of disinvestment by capital) is physically changed so as to replace the existing residents with wealthier ones. Improving or revitalizing an area of town in and of itself could be a positive development, if done with and for the benefit of the existing community. However, the competition of capitalism creates a need for a constant increase of profit; in cities, a proven profit-making strategy is transforming neighborhoods from working-class to middle-class or upper-class communities.

This is why lower-income residents often fight against redevelopment and revitalization efforts, even though they themselves are working to improve their communities. The primary issue in this situation is power: who benefits from and who controls the development process? In most situations, the key players are real estate investors, landlords, and banks. With finance capital from around the world coming into the Mission District to fuel the dot-com boom, gentrification went full throttle. The most visible sign that gentrification is happening is an increase in the number of white people in neighborhoods where the population was formerly working-class people of color.

One of the leading organizations fighting back was the Eviction Defense Network (EDN). Formed in 1995 by James Tracy, a former FNB white

working-class organizer, EDN had the same uncompromising spirit as FNB, but a tighter organizational structure, along with a community-based organizing strategy. EDN recruited FNB members to focus on the fight for public housing; through EDN, the mostly white anti-authoritarian Left set out to work with primarily poor people of color to win concrete housing victories—building tenant power in the process. FNB played a support role in tenant rallies and protests that EDN helped to organize.[41] In 1999, EDN and Mission Agenda organized a "March of the Evicted" with dozens of organizations involved. This march of four hundred people, signaled a higher level of unity and organization in the economic justice movement: an anti-gentrification agenda that brought together the key issues facing working-class communities in the city. As SF FNB focused more on these sorts of collaborations and coalitions in the second half of the 1990s, the movement grew stronger. This, in turn, helped us to see the role we could play in a larger movement.

This was especially important as the Brown administration tried to remove FNB from United Nations Plaza as a next step in pushing poor people out of the area. In October of 1999, two SF FNB members were arrested for serving. More arrests followed at servings over the next few weeks, targeting both FNBers and people eating at the servings.[42] We saw this crackdown on homeless people as part of the overall gentrification process in San Francisco, and this helped us to see allies and broader communities with which we were in solidarity. We went on the offensive. We were determined to fight the new round of arrests and to maintain the community meal in UN Plaza. We set up a legal defense team, contacted the media, and prepared ourselves for more arrests. We also called on our allies —in particular, Tom Ammiano, a member of the municipal Board of Supervisors who had just entered the race for mayor. Ammiano came from the progressive-Left queer community that gave rise to Harvey Milk in the late 1970s. While technically never endorsing candidates, SF FNB had Ammiano speak at some of our events and many of us worked on his campaign. We believed he could, at best, take some of the steam out of the mayor's momentum and, at least, give us time to bring our community and allies together. During this time, Sister Bernie Galvin of Religious Witness also joined us to serve. When she was arrested, she announced a hunger

strike until FNB arrests ended. She then encouraged the whole Religious Witness community to begin fasting for an end to FNB arrests.

With Ammiano's office negotiating with the mayor and the police department for us, Religious Witness began playing a major role in those negotiations. By this point, we had organized our allies, felt strong as a group, and had pulled off some successful guerrilla theater. We asked Sister Bernie to end the hunger strike and encouraged her to declare victory since FNB had built community pressure and not backed down. The negotiations and hunger strike ended just before Thanksgiving. Ammiano's office, meanwhile, scheduled a public hearing at city hall on FNB arrests. This gave us an opportunity to show our community support, sending a clear message that the assault on poor people was unpopular in San Francisco, and asserting that FNB and our broad range of supporters would not back down. As we were building for the hearing, thousands of activists from the Bay Area, including FNBers, made their way to Seattle for the WTO protests. When we returned, we were itching to take on city hall. FNB packed the hearing and representatives from over a dozen organizations gave testimony supporting FNB and the rights of poor people. Mayor Brown never publicly responded, but the arrests ended and the community meals continued.

San Francisco Food Not Bombs, the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition, and a New Strategic Organizing Approach

The economic justice movement in the city continued to grow stronger. In the spring of 2000, a powerful coalition of community-based organizations formed the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC). The purpose of MAC was to "defend and organize the multiracial, predominantly Latino, working-class community of the Mission—families, tenants, artists, small businesses—against displacement and for community-based planning, to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of the Mission, and to network in solidarity with other neighborhoods facing displacement pressures."

As the coalition fought gentrification, it also used popular education in community meetings to support residents in developing new zoning and planning guidelines. The resulting "People's Plan" involved hundreds of Mission residents taking on local economic planning, using a participatory

process that built the power of the community to control the decisions impacting it. MAC organizers used the People's Plan to both organize residents and develop concrete policies that they could pressure city hall to implement. At the same time, MAC used direct action, occupying dot-com office buildings and new condos. They defended homes facing evictions and regularly turned Planning Commission meetings into community speak-outs against gentrification. MAC also sent out teams to wheat-paste multicolored posters, including one reading, "We Plan for People, They Plan for Profit."

In the city's 2000 election, MAC played a leading role in changing the terms of debate on gentrification, electing a progressive majority to the Board of Supervisors, and building broad community support. When the new supervisors took their positions, MAC held a rally to both celebrate their victories and remind the new supervisors that they were accountable to the community. The new board passed some pro-tenant, anti-gentrification legislation and MAC continued to develop the People's Plan. This was far from a total victory, since gentrification did continue, albeit at a slower pace. However, the goals of MAC were to organize the community and build power. Over the next three years, MAC went through a community planning process involving over a thousand residents. The fight to implement the People's Plan continues to this day. Many of us from SF FNB were inspired by how MAC implemented a prefigurative strategy: one that develops a vision of how society should be organized while also taking concrete steps to move in that direction. People's immediate needs were central, but they were also firmly situated in a bigger-picture strategy of working-class self-management of society. The long-term vision guiding MAC was of an organized neighborhood fighting for self-determination for low-income people of color.

During the summer and winter of 2000, many SF FNB members participated in and offered logistical support for MAC's direct actions, rallies, marches, and community planning meetings. Along the way, we were developing analysis and learning about organizing. With our rents increasing, some of us facing eviction, and all of us knowing people who had been evicted, SF FNBers developed an understanding that many white FNB members had been part of the early wave of gentrification. Often, young white activists, artists, students, and queers are the first white people to

move into low-income communities of color. If real estate developers and landlords are aiming to gentrify the neighborhood, this first wave of white people then leads to wealthier white people moving in alongside stores and services for this new clientele.

Through MAC, SF FNB members also came away with a clearer understanding of the importance of both leadership development and building Left organizations through struggles. This meant focusing more on building power over the long haul than on winning on particular issues. While MAC fought to win concrete victories, many of the organizations involved talked about the importance of "base building," which meant both developing the leadership of their members and getting more people in the community involved. The primary goal, in this approach, is not whether you win on a particular issue; rather, it prioritizes the process of building a community's power so as to equalize the fundamental power relations in society. While SF FNB had engaged in numerous campaigns over the years, we rarely focused on building anyone's power to change society. We wanted to stop something from happening or demand that something must happen. We focused on building the power of our group to be effective, but we weren't thinking about whole classes or groups of people in society. The key piece missing from our strategy was: *how* would power shift? We would talk about the need for massive actions and look to general strikes as a key revolutionary tactic, but we were unclear about how we would get from our small groups to the revolutionary change we knew was necessary.

Through MAC, we were thus learning about the role of organizing to develop the capacity of everyday people to take control of their lives. We had been moving in this direction for a while, and in the fall of 1999, we took three important steps to institutionalize our new insights. First, when we faced a new wave of arrests from the Brown administration, we took time to read chapters from the community organizing manual *Organizing for Social Change* along with essays by women of color feminists like Barbara Smith about organizing against white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism. Second, in preparation for the WTO protests, we did our first internal study on capitalism. Led by loretta carbone, a graduate student in International Political Economy, this workshop presented an overview of the historical development of capitalism and neoliberalism.

Her session helped us conceptualize the long-term and structural nature of social change which, in turn, helped us ask questions about what kinds of movements would be necessary to really shift power. Finally, many of us went to Seattle to shut down the WTO. The mass-scale organizing we saw there, which included coalitions with broad sectors of labor and community-based organizations, affirmed our many years of solidarity work and pushed us to expand our conceptions of what successful organizing could accomplish. Back in San Francisco, MAC provided a way to bring the energy of the global justice movement to our long-term economic justice work, and through it we built stronger relationships to groups with a community-based organizing approach.

Celebrating the Twentieth Anniversary of Food Not Bombs

Throughout the 1990s, SF FNB had held an annual free outdoor concert called "Soupstock" to commemorate FNB's founding anniversary in Boston. As the twentieth anniversary approached in 2000, we knew we had to throw a huge celebration, and we worked for six months to put on our biggest event yet. I had decided in early 2000 to leave FNB, and I consulted with other members to make a transition plan to pass off my responsibilities and leadership in the group. Soupstock was going to be my last big event as a member of FNB, and I wanted to contribute whatever I could towards leaving the group as strong as possible. The planning team was majority-women. We drafted a mission statement for the anniversary party, set organizing goals, made a work plan, and pulled off a festival that turned out fifteen thousand people and featured an incredible musical lineup that included Sleater-Kinney, Bonfire Madigan, DJs from the Invisibl Skratch Piklz, several local performers, and a special performance by Fugazi. We featured spoken word poets and guest speakers who highlighted the achievements of FNB, of working-class people's movements for justice in San Francisco and around the world. We situated FNB in a global movement against neoliberalism and for humanity. Overall, it was a beautiful day. We brought together over three hundred volunteers who served food to thousands, built an all-women and transgender security team, ran a separate rave dance area, offered workshops in a "Free Skool," and gathered dozens of organizations to table and recruit for their work. We raised over $25,000

after expenses, and brought new people into the group. We wanted FNBers to feel proud of all that we had accomplished over the years and we wanted to honor the thousands of people who had made FNB what it is. Pausing to take in the magnitude of the event that day, many of us felt we had achieved our goal.

New Paths: The Work Continues

In the summer of 2000, I left SF FNB to become a trainer and organizer with the Challenging White Supremacy (CWS) Workshops in the Bay Area, which provided intensive study of movement history and training in organizing skills. By the end of 2000, most of the longtime FNB members from the early 1990s had moved on as well. The newer generation of leaders committed to a praxis-based organizing approach moved the group forward.

Over the following years, SF FNB continued to work with the Day Labor Program and the Coalition on Homelessness in addition to serving daily community meals. For the first time, core members crafted an explicit plan for leadership development. This plan consisted primarily of meeting one-on-one with other members to encourage them to take on higher levels of responsibility in the group while offering them support, in addition to focusing on analysis and skill building. In the past we had often focused on passing on skills, but the new plan included the critical dimension of helping people overcome insecurities and self-doubts and replace them with an understanding of the tasks at hand and a belief in their ability to do them. Additionally, SF FNB members went through the CWS training program to develop as organizers and leaders.

With a much higher level of political unity and strategic focus, the new wave of SF FNB leaders continued to make progress. When research connected a new wave of intensified police harassment of homeless people to a municipal gentrification plan called "Operation Midway," SF FNB went through its first strategic planning process. The group developed plans for a long-term campaign, in alliance with the Coalition and other poor people's organizations, to fight gentrification in the targeted area. They used political education and campaign planning tools to build capacity for strategic thinking. As part of its plan, SF FNB utilized its community meals to do outreach for the campaign. The group also took on a major role in a

Coalition-led campaign to defeat a new ballot measure by Gavin Newsom to further cut the city's welfare program. SF FNB members helped develop and implement the electoral strategy. In addition, SF FNB supported the Day Labor Program in their struggle to win a new office space over the objections of well-organized, explicitly racist neighbors who wanted day laborers removed entirely. Many white FNB members did neighborhood outreach to talk about the issues and demonstrate that there were white people who lived in the area and supported the day laborers. FNBers also mobilized people to attend public hearings to support the Day Labor Program building.

Over time, however, many SF FNBers found it overwhelming to simultaneously run these campaigns, continue the community meals, and sustain and build a volunteer-based organization. More core members, many of who had led the campaign work and had worked with MAC, left the group to join other organizations with a stronger organizing focus. Some continue to work with SF FNB, which continues to serve free community meals.

Out of the CWS Workshops, former FNBers Clare Bayard and Kerry Levenberg joined me and another CWS leader, Missy Longshore, to build Catalyst Project. Catalyst was initially a project of CWS and later became an independent center for political education and movement building. A primary goal of Catalyst is to support activists in the development of praxis-based organizing that brings together systemic analysis with a community organizing approach to building power in oppressed communities in order to transform the relationships and work towards collective liberation. Our experiences in SF FNB had a major influence on the vision, strategy, politics, and practice of Catalyst. More then a dozen FNBers went on to become staff members of the Coalition on Homelessness, and far more contributed as volunteers. Some are still living on the streets and fighting for economic justice through Homes Not Jails, faith-based social justice efforts, and in whatever other ways they can. Many have joined the dozens of volunteer-based groups with which SF FNB worked in solidarity with. Many bring their radical politics to their workplaces in health care, and social services, or through their unions and worker-owned cooperatives. Many are parents and educators working to raise the next generations with liberation values and culture. Some went on to be union organizers or community organizers.

Others do progressive media work in print, radio, and online. Some of us formed the Heads Up Collective after September 11 to bridge anti-war work with local racial and economic justice struggles, building off FNB's previous coalition work.

From 1989 to 2002, over three thousand people worked with SF FNB and over forty thousand people came to SF FNB events, protests, or benefits. We estimate, conservatively, that during these years SF FNB served over a million individual meals at our regular servings and did over a thousand solidarity servings. Today, hundreds of FNB chapters operate around the world and FNB continues to be an important gateway for thousands of people, in small towns, rural communities, suburbs, and cities, to come into activism.

The struggle to develop collective processes for study, action, and reflection in order to create effective practice is one that we experience throughout the Left. While we can individually have praxis-based approaches to organizing, it is far more powerful to do this in organizations. Organizations are the spaces in which we practice our politics and build relationships of trust and respect where we can teach one another and learn collectively. A broad spectrum of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives helps develop a more comprehensive understanding of the world we live in, and gives depth to evaluation and reflection. The continuity of an organization also allows for a greater degree of testing ideas in both the day-to-day operations and the programs and actions it implements. These, at least, are the lessons I learned through the efforts to develop a praxis-based organizing approach to win economic justice and build a grassroots, democratic, anti-racist, feminist Left during my eight years as an FNB organizer. While we often fell short of our ultimate goals, many of us also learned the importance of building loving radical culture in the here and now to help sustain us as we work for the long term, building power in working-class and oppressed communities for justice.

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1 An affinity group is a small group of activists, generally six to twenty people, who come together on the basis of political or tactical unity to organize themselves democratically in order to participate more effectively in political action and organizing.

2 My estimates for the number of FNB chapters and participants are conservative. It is very difficult to get an accurate number as both chapters and participants are constantly coming and going. While hundreds of FNB groups have existed for more than five years, many have also come and gone in

the span of a year. To illustrate this, it is common in many locations for FNB chapters to begin and end, over and over again, so that in one city, there may have been three FNB groups composed almost entirely of different people. From 1992 until today, I have periodically kept track of the number of reported groups—always far more than actually exist, as it is hard to know when a group has ended, while there are also many cases of people trying to start groups that never materialize. My estimate is therefore based on cutting the number of reported groups down by two thirds to feel confident in groups I know have existed, even though I believe more groups *may* have existed. The number of participants is based on the assessment that the average FNB group involves at least twenty people over the course of its existence, while a few hundred have involved fifty to a hundred people and several dozen have involved from a hundred to five hundred participants. A few have had over a thousand members. I believe my estimate of fifty thousand is on the low end, as I have kept the averages of participants and the number of existing groups low.

3 For an excellent history of the anti-nuke movement see Barbara Epstein's *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s.* This text is extremely helpful in tracing the organizing tradition influencing many of us in the mostly white sectors of the global justice movement.

4 To help groups use consensus decision-making, C.T. Butler of FNB co-authored a book with Amy Rothstein called *On Conflict and Consensus* that explains how to use consensus and the philosophy behind it. FNB published *On Conflict and Consensus* in the early 1990s and distributed it widely. Consensus decision-making trainings and manuals, along with flow charts and "meeting behavior dos and don'ts," are widespread in FNB circles.

5 All of the statistics on poverty and homelessness in this chapter come from Gerald Daly's *Homeless: Policies, Strategies, and Lives on the Street.*

6 Usually referred to as simply "the Coalition," the Coalition on Homelessness was founded in 1987 to support poor and working-class people's leadership in struggling for economic justice.

7 For an excellent analysis of the political economy of San Francisco, see Jaron Browne, Marisa Franco, Jason Negrón-Gonzalez, and Steve Williams, *Towards Land, Work & Power: Charting a Path of Resistance to U.S.-Led Imperialism* (San Francisco: Unite to Fight Press, 2005).

8 My understanding of the class composition in SF FNB is based on my work in the group in the 1990s, but poor and working-class people were leaders in the group in the 1980s and continue to play leading roles in the group today.

9 Ella Baker also influenced my understanding of organizing, which she refers to as the day-to-day work—often boring, tedious, and backbreaking—that prepares the soil for seeds to be planted. Once those seeds begin to grow, the organizer helps bring people together into groups and supports their leadership and capacity to solve their own problems. The book that has most influenced my understanding of Ella Baker's organizing practice is Charles Payne's *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

10 "During my investigation, I was able to obtain the private phone number of 'Food Not Bombs' organizer, Keith McHenry, who unknowingly was a great asset to this investigation," admitted San Francisco Police Captain Dick Holder. See: http://www.foodnotbombs.net/wiretap1.html.

11 This is a reference to the famous acts of civil disobedience by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the early 1960s, during which Black activists had faced humiliation, arrest, and horrific violence when sitting at "white-only" lunch counters in Woolworth's stores.

12 The starting point for such analysis is at once social, political, economic, and historical. The world economy shifted after World War II from a nation-based colonialist imperialism, in which colonizing countries controlled the political and economic lives of other countries, to a "neocolonial" or "neoliberal" imperialist system. With oppressed people winning greater political

power through anti-colonial national liberation struggles around the world and anti-racist struggles inside nations like the United States, the ruling classes in the late 1970s shifted to a strategy of limited cultural pluralism, assimilation of, primarily middle-class, people of color, and an international economic agenda to cut and privatize social services, expand the prison system, and relocate industry to the Third World where it can be disciplined by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. With limited options for well paying jobs, people of color, usually men, have gone historically into the military and then the police force. Furthermore, entry into the police department has long been a demand coming from segments of communities of color as part of campaigns against police brutality and racism.

13 He did so, through both personal study and getting support from mentors, and later rejoined the group making many positive contributions.

14 The struggle for Mumia Abu-Jamal's freedom continues to this day. For updates on the case, see http://www.mumia.org.

15 The Bay Area Study Group, *Playground of U.S. Capitalism? The Political Economy of the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1980s.*

16 Jaron Browne, Marisa Franco, Jason Negrón-Gonzalez, and Steve Williams, *Towards Land, Work & Power: Charting a Path of Resistance to U.S.-Led Imperialism.*

17 This dynamic unfolded multiple times in SF FNB. A poor person of color would take center stage in a way that was disruptive to a meeting or an event; the white people would freeze, not knowing what to do except hope the disruption would end quickly. The apparent thought process went like this: "Well, if we challenge the person on this behavior, what if they call us a racist? Would we be racist to challenge the person to begin with? If a person of color calls you a racist it has to be true, regardless of the situation." One white person who was both a longtime FNBer and a friend of the man posting the flyers did call him out on it. When this got back to the group, another white FNBer told that person that it was racist to have done this. This situation reflected a general fear and sense of guilt associated with dealing with racism that was prevalent in the group culture, as well as the complexity of how to address these issues in healthy ways for everyone involved.

18 See *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire (New York: Continuum), which influenced many of us.

19 This position paper circulated widely within the United States, Canada, and Europe and was translated into French and German.

20 At this time, FNB and most of the social justice movement in which we were located spoke of gender in terms of women and men. Since this time, there has been a massive increase of visible leadership, activism, and writing from transgender, genderqueer, gender non-conforming people about the many ways people experience and live their genders outside of the gender binary of "women" and "men." In writing about this history, I generally use the terms we used at the time.

21 Thanks to Clare Bayard, an organizer with Catalyst Project and former Food Not Bombs organizer, for helping me develop this analysis.

22 In these sexual harassment cases, we never got to the point of developing next steps because the men involved consistently refused to take responsibility for their behavior. Most of them had little commitment to FNB's larger goals from the start. We would later develop a process for conflict resolution.

23 They frequently cited examples of men cutting off women in conversations; men making eye contact only with other men; men frequently ignoring women's ideas; men repeating women's ideas and only then taking those ideas seriously; men soliciting one another's opinions, but not women's; men recognizing one another for their work, but not women; and men remembering each other's names and referring to them in conversation, while forgetting or not mentioning women's names. These conversations would also include discussion of general trends, such as how men often felt

empowered to make significant decisions on their own, while women felt a lack of trust and confidence from the group to do the same; how men felt confident to represent the group speaking at rallies or to the media, but women felt like the group doubted their legitimacy to represent it; men felt ownership over the group and exercised leadership, but women felt like they have to fight to be heard, taken seriously, or recognized as leaders.

24 Jennifer Susskind, a Jewish anarchist union organizer with SEIU, and longtime direct action organizer David Solnit of Art and Revolution both influenced my understanding of the role of an organizer. James Mumm's essay "Active Revolution" also had a major influence on my understanding of the differences between an organizer and an activist.

25 This began as a standing Events Committee that planned all actions and events. When, for many consecutive months, this committee consisted of almost entirely men, women protested and demanded that it no longer operate as a standing committee. Thereafter, we created ad hoc work groups for each event that came up, so as to diversify and expand the participation in planning and implementing them.

26 FNB was a secular group but had many alliances with radical faith communities. In addition to the St. John Coltrane African Orthodox Church, this included the Catholic Workers, the Reclaiming pagan community, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, St. Boniface Catholic Church, Martin de Pores House of Hospitality, and the interfaith Religious Witness with Homeless People that included dozens of Bay Area synagogues, mosques, and churches. We also had students from faith-based schools that periodically joined FNB as part of a class they were taking, or in some cases religious schools sent large delegations of students to work with us.

27 There was an important exception to this. Most of us had a severe dislike for sectarian Marxist groups like the Revolutionary Communist Party, the International Socialist Organization, and the Spartacist League. In our view, they were characterized by two things: First, an absolute faith that they alone were right and that it was their mission to tell us how wrong we were. Second, a firm priority on building their groups over—and often at the expense of—broader movements. Most of us had direct experiences with how these parties operated in coalitions and at events. Their arrogance was, to us, a clear reminder that the Marxist Left was composed of totalitarians who would force humanity to bend or be broken in accordance with their ideology. Many of us saw in these groups the communists who had killed anarchists in the Russian and Spanish Revolutions. We saw the practices that would lead to a dictatorship, if given the chance, and we saw it as our responsibility as anarchists to stop them. The irony was that some of us spent more energy arguing with these groups than we did talking with people who were new to activism. To onlookers, we were two groups of extremists yelling at each other about an imaginary revolution. In retrospect, it was just that. In general, these sectarian groups were on the fringe, yet we thought of them as barriers to building powerful movements, and they continually came to our events and tried to sell us their newspapers. One of the tragedies of these groups was that they alienated many new activists from the important insights of the Marxist tradition. They also gave many of us a bad association with basic organizing tactics like recruitment, expressing our politics, and promoting our organizations.

28 A sample of struggles for which we prepared meals in 1996 covers quite a range: immigrant-rights rallies, benefits for a Medical Marijuana ballot initiative, Earth First! actions, an SEIU health care workers action, BACORR (Bay Area Coalition for Reproductive Rights) actions, a mass meeting to stop the extradition of an Irish political prisoner, actions with Navajo and Hopi leaders to defend Big Mountain, pickets with the Eviction Defense Network, a conference on Women of Color and Low-Income Women's Health, performances by the S.F. Mime Troupe, actions for political prisoner Leonard Peltier, a rally for health care rights at Chowchilla Valley State Prison for Women, anti-police brutality rallies, and a political education session on Guatemala.

29 The day laborers (Spanish: *jornaleros),* nearly all men, are from Mexico and Central America and stand on the street hoping to be picked up by employers in construction and other industries.

30 Keith Hennessy's comments were profoundly important for me. I am deeply grateful for the ways both he and Deke Nihilson (a working-class queer organizer with both the IWW and FNB), changed my understanding of leadership.

31 Praxis House celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2006. Jeff Larson, Rahula Janowski, their daughter Natasha, Clare Bayard, Sasha Vodnik, and I continued to live and work together for many years.

32 The article "Part of the International Struggle for Economic Human Rights" by Jenna E. Ziman and Hugh Mejia published in *Peace Works* is a good assessment of how we did this. See: http://www.afsc.org/pwork/0699/0609.htm.

33 To learn more about Religious Witness, see http://religiouswitnesshome.org.

34 San Francisco's local legislative body, equivalent to a City Council.

35 The city government put up new fences in UN Plaza two years later, and has since removed much of the lawn area, where people slept. The area is now mainly concrete.

36 For more information on the BBB see http://bioticbakingbrigade.org/aboutbbb.html and their book *Pie Any Means Necessary.*

37 Anarchist labor leaders, executed by the state in the late 1880s, who led the struggle in the United States for the eight-hour workday, and fought to build the power of the working class to self-govern. See Paul Avrich's *The Haymarket Tragedy.*

38 For example from 1995 to 2000, Praxis House alone had well over 150 activist guests stay at our home. Many had worked with FNB in their communities. In addition to activists from the United States and Canada, we also hosted over a dozen activists from Germany, where there are FNB chapters in many cities.

39 For example, East Bay FNB put out the "World Food Not Bombs Operators Manual" with a "How-To" section on starting a group, a political orientation, and tips on everything from "Building Democratic Groups" to "Health and Safety."

40 Keith McHenry continues to bring valuable and important leadership to the Food Not Bombs movement. He has, without a doubt, been the driving force that helps unify the FNB movement, and continues to be. He has done this by administrating the FNB website (http://www.foodnotbombs.net), maintaining the international contact list, conducting speaking tours around the world, writing frequently about FNB activity, distributing FNB news and announcements, and producing and selling FNB merchandise to fund these efforts. I have an enormous amount of respect and admiration for the work he has done over the years and I present this history to help strengthen our overall work.

41 The Eviction Defense Network later became a taskforce of Mission Agenda.

42 One of the people arrested at the serving was charged with "destroying evidence" because he was eating a bagel.

Section II

"We Make the Road by Walking": Developing Anti-Racist Feminist Practice

GOING TO PLACES THAT SCARE ME

Personal Reflections on Challenging Male Supremacy

Part I: "How Can I be Sexist? I'm an Anarchist!"

"What do you mean I'm sexist?" I was shocked. I wasn't a macho guy. I didn't hate or assault women. I wasn't a bad guy. "But I'm an anarchist! How can I be sexist?" I was anxious, nervous, and my defenses were up. I believed in liberation, in fighting against capitalism and the state. There are those who are the architects, profiteers, and enforcers of injustice and then there was us, right? I was nineteen and it was four years after I got involved in radical politics; my sense of the world was slipping.

Nilou Mostoufi, my comrade and partner at the time, held my hand and patiently explained, "I'm not saying you're an evil person. I'm saying that you're sexist, and sexism happens in a lot of subtle and blatant ways. You cut me off when I'm talking. You pay more attention to what men say. The other day when I was sitting at the coffee shop with you and Mike, it was like the two of you were having a conversation and I was just there to watch. I tried to jump in and say something, but you both just looked at me and then went back to your conversation. Men in the group make eye contact with each other and act like women aren't even there. The study group has become a forum for men in the group to go on and on about this book and that book, like they know everything and just need to teach the rest of us."

This can't be true, I thought. Is she mad at me about something else? Maybe she's just having a hard time and we can get over this.

She continued, "For a long time I thought maybe it was just me, maybe what I had to say wasn't as useful or exciting. Maybe I needed to change my approach, maybe I was just overreacting, maybe it was just in my head and I needed to get over it. But then I saw how the same thing was happening to other women in the group, over and over again. I'm not blaming you for all of this, but you're a big part of this group and you're part of this dynamic." While I struggled to understand what she was telling me, this conversation was the beginning of a process that profoundly changed my life. Nilou pushed me to realize that in order to work for liberation I needed to make a lifelong commitment to feminist politics and actively work against male supremacy.

In order to make the commitment, I needed to begin seeing myself as part of complex relationships of power, privilege, and oppression and begin to understand how I have internalized the logic of domination. My sense of self was in question and I could no longer see the path I had imagined myself taking as an activist. I doubted myself and immediately felt isolated. Fear replaced my sense of possibility and my heart ached with the possibility that I might be an enforcer and beneficiary of the same violent system that I was against.

This is an essay for other people raised male who identify as men and who, like me, are Left/anarchist organizers with privilege struggling to build movements for collective liberation. It is written for men in the movement who have been challenged on their sexism and male privilege and are looking for support. I'm focusing here on the emotional aspects of my own experience of dealing with issues of sexism and anti-sexism. I'm choosing this focus because it is personally challenging, because it has been important in my political development to have men be open and vulnerable with me about their own process, and because of consistent feedback from women, genderqueer, and transgender people, who I work with that it's crucial that we not ignore these aspects of the work. In a discussion with Rona Fernandez, then the executive director of the Youth Empowerment Center in Oakland and an advisor to Catalyst Project, she said, "Encourage men/gender-privileged folks to examine the role of emotions (or lack thereof) in their experience of privilege. I'm saying this because I think men/gender-privileged folks also suffer under the system of patriarchy, and one of the most dehumanizing ways they suffer is in their inability/difficulty in expressing feelings." Clare Bayard, a genderqueer organizer with Catalyst Project, put it more bluntly: "It took years of study and hard work to develop your political analysis. Why do you think emotional understanding should just come to you? It requires work as well."

This essay looks to the leadership of women—and women of color in particular—who write about and organize against patriarchy in society and sexism in the movement. I draw inspiration especially from the work of Barbara Smith, Gloria Anzaldúa, Ella Baker, Patricia Hill Collins, Elizabeth 'Betita' Martínez, bell hooks, and so many others who provide the political foundations, visions, and strategies for the work that gender-privileged men need to do. The day-to-day leadership in my life comes from my comrades

who have challenged, pushed, and struggled with me hundreds of times in our organizations and our lives, comrades like Nilou Mostoufi, April Sullivan, Johnna Bossuot, Rahula Janowski, Ingrid Chapman, Marc Mascarenhas-Swan, Molly McClure, Nisha Anand, and Rachel Luft.

More and more, gender-privileged men in the movement are working to challenge male supremacy. Thousands of us recognize that patriarchy exists; that we have material and psychological privileges as a result; that sexism undermines movements; that women, transgender, and genderqueer people have explained it over and over again and said "you all need to talk with each other, challenge each other, and figure out what you're all going to do." However, a far greater number of men in the movement agree that sexism exists in society, perhaps even in the movement, but deny their personal participation in it.

Lisa Sousa, who is part of the San Francisco Independent Media Center and AK Press, told me that in discussions she's had in groups about sexism and gender, she's heard the following responses from men: "we are all oppressed"; "we should be talking about class"; and "you are just using gender as a way to attack such and such." When she raised the issue that women generally leave the majority-male group soon after joining, the responses included: "men leave our group too"; "women are not leaving more"; "people leave, it's a fact in volunteer organizations"; "we just need to recruit more women"; and "if women leave, there's more where they came from."

These comments are familiar, as I've made them and heard other men make them hundreds of times. And while it is tempting to distance myself from the men who made them, it's important that I remember the times when I've made those comments, too. That is, as a person who believes in movement building and collective liberation, it's crucial for me to connect with the people I'm organizing with. As a person with privilege organizing others with privilege, that means learning to love myself enough to be able to see myself in people who I would much rather denounce and distance myself from. It also means being honest about my experiences, mistakes, and learning process.

When I think back to that conversation with Nilou and her explanation of how sexism operates, I remember trying not to shut down, trying to listen. The word "but" repeated over and over again in my mind, followed

by: “it was a misunderstanding”; “I didn’t mean it that way”; “if I knew you felt that way, I wouldn’t have done it”; “I wasn’t trying to do that”; “I would love to see you participate more”; “no one said they didn’t want to hear what you had to say”; “we all believe in equality”; and “I love you and would never do anything to hurt you.”

Looking back, it’s amazing how often that same list of “buts” still comes to mind. I’m more like those so-called other men than I’d like to admit. For many of us who have been challenged on sexism, we hear the critique and get stuck in the defensiveness and frustration of not knowing what to do. In my rush to solve the problem, I didn’t really understand the depth of the problem to begin with. I focused on particular circumstances rather than systemic sexism. I felt that everything was very personal and I didn’t know how to place myself in a historical and institutional analysis. I wanted to solve what I perceived to be my partner’s or my comrade’s issues. While I genuinely wanted to help stop painful situations from happening, this focus led me away from taking responsibility in the long-term struggle for revolutionary change.

Nilou spent many hours talking with me about sexism. It was difficult for both of us, and I recognize her courage and generosity in doing this largely in retrospect. A clearly defined dualistic framework of good and bad shaped my politics. If it was true that I was sexist, than my previous sense of self was in question: I must have been bad. She pushed me to develop a more complex framework. Coming from her own experience as a middle-class Iranian, she helped me begin to locate myself within a complex power analysis of society in which I had material and psychological privilege as a man. I recognized this as a profoundly important moment in my growth. And it still felt like shit.

Two weeks later, as our anarchist study group meeting came to a close, Nilou raised the concern that “sexism is happening in this group.” “Oh my god,” I thought, “What am I going to do?” It was one thing to be in intimate conversations with my partner about this, but with our whole group? I had unconsciously hoped that Nilou and I could just work all this out privately, and everything else would continue as normal.

She listed the examples she had told me. The five other men in the room now amplified the defensive reaction that I’d had. I didn’t know what to do. I believed that Nilou was right, but I didn’t understand what it meant. Other

women started speaking up. They had experienced these dynamics as well and they were tired of it. The other men were shocked and defensive, and they began listing all the reasons why claims of sexism were simply misunderstandings, miscommunications, and misperceptions. With genuine sincerity, they said, "But we all want revolution."

To understand the situation we faced, I should give some background history. We were all members of the United Anarchist Front, an activist youth group formed in the late 1980s in Whittier, a suburb of Los Angeles. At first, we focused primarily on animal rights, passed out literature on vegetarianism at our high school, and regularly protested McDonald's as part of an international environmental and animal rights campaign led by London Greenpeace. We held protests against Shell Oil, for their participation in apartheid in South Africa, and we put out an underground newspaper called the Student Liberty Press. A driving force in the group was Mike Rejniak, a seventeen-year-old working-class political punk who dressed like a Catholic school student and was popular in almost every social scene in school. Another chapter of the UAF formed in Orange County, led by Jason Justice, a longtime friend from Boy Scouts. For the first few years, the UAF was essentially a group of teenagers, who came of age together doing politics.

We were further radicalized by the Gulf War in 1991: we participated in mass marches in Los Angeles of over ten thousand people; began reading Noam Chomsky; repeatedly covered our school in anti-war and anarchist chalk graffiti; passed out anti-capitalist, antiwar literature; argued U.S. foreign policy with teachers during classes; and faced off with the Young Republicans in the debate club (and won!). Through all of this, we created a visible Left/anarchist pole at our high school that gave legitimacy to radical politics, which then gained broader influence. Other students began asking us for our opinions about a wide range of issues. We were asked to write editorials for the school paper and an anti-Gulf War piece for the annual. More and more, people began handing out our flyers despite occasionally being sent to the principal's office, and our protests on a variety of issues went from drawing a half a dozen to more than forty people.

The UAF itself was a handful of people, but our social scene grew to over sixty, with many more passing through our frequent parties and political events which brought together young people from multiple high schools and

the local community college. Many began exploring feminist, anarchist, and socialist politics and attending demonstrations. In addition to regularly distributing flyers on current issues from a radical perspective, we distributed anarchist newspapers from around the country and books on anarchist politics and history. We also distributed social justice T-shirts, buttons, stickers, and patches which gave people an immediate way to publicly express their politics. Many of us were white and middle-class, with a large number of working-class young people and a smaller number of people of color. Men in the UAF were regularly accused of being queer, because of our politics and public displays of affection. Rather than deny it or get defensive, we argued that there wasn't anything wrong with being queer: the problem was homophobia. Some of us dealt periodically with anti-gay slurs and occasional threats of physical assault on and off campus, but we stuck together. While most of us were primarily heterosexual, it became a badge of honor to be called queer, whether you were or not. Several people in our circles came out as queer and others who were queer joined our community. At parties, people of all genders regularly made out with each other, and we talked openly about safe sex, masturbation, and consensual sex (particularly between men and women). We had designated drivers and tried to have all of our parties at houses where people could stay the night so as to cut down on drunk driving. While we had a long way to go, we were actively trying to create countercultural youth spaces that reflected our political commitments.[1]

In 1992, others began working with the UAF, including April Sullivan, the first woman to formally join the group. While women regularly participated in the activities of the group, April was the first to formally become a member, take on responsibilities, and help plan activities. The lack of women's involvement was in no way due to a lack of interest. It was due primarily to the insular and informal leadership structure based on male bonding that had developed, combined with our lack of understanding and skill about building a group. We worked with other anarchist groups around Southern California and joined the national Love and Rage Network, which put forward revolutionary anti-imperialist, feminist, anti-racist anarchist politics in their monthly newspaper. We got together regularly to read *Love*

and Rage and other anarchist publications and books at the local coffee shop in the mall.[2]

The Rodney King verdict in 1992 further radicalized us, as we went to Black-led, multiracial anti-police brutality marches and debated about the meaning of the L.A. riots at school. White students and some teachers talked about the "senseless violence" of the rioters who were acting like "animals." The racist violence of the police and the public sanctioning of it in the courtroom was absent from their denunciations of "mindless rioters." The anarcho-punk newspaper *Profane Existence* put forward an analysis of how de-industrialization in South Central, corporations moving to third world countries to exploit cheaper labor, Black workers removed from the labor market and the history of racist police brutality were all central to the L.A. uprising. *Profane Existence* supported the riot and encouraged activists to join in anti-police brutality struggles. We used this analysis in debates with white students and teachers and in our writing around the verdict and riots.

With more and more people coming to protests, our social circle growing, and the radicalizing experience of the Rodney King verdict, a few of us decided it was time to expand the UAF and our organizing. We primarily discussed and planned our work informally over coffee or beer with two or three of us making all the decisions and holding most of the responsibilities. We had just recently participated in our first formal meetings, organized by Long Beach Food Not Bombs (FNB), and it blew our minds. They had agendas and facilitators and used consensus decision-making with over thirty people to develop a plan for a Southern California Anarchist Gathering. We set goals and formed work committees to map out work plans to make it happen. We left those meetings inspired with new ideas and tools for organizing. We invited people from our social circle to join the UAF and began holding weekly meetings. Soon we had a dozen members, and another dozen who regularly participated in group work. We decided on actions to take, formed work committees, and launched a study group to collectively support one another's political growth. Our work gained momentum and we began collaborating more with anarchist collectives around Southern California.

We were six months into the process of building this collective when Nilou raised the issue of sexism in the group. Men immediately began

arguing with Nilou about the points she raised; they were defensive, and most of the other women were quiet while Nilou tried to explain herself. I sat quietly as well, confused and scared to say anything. April, who came from a white working-class Irish family and had been in the group for well over a year, pulled me aside. She gave me example after example of sexist behavior. Men in the group didn't trust her to handle responsibilities, even when they were newer to the group. She wasn't looked to for information about the history or work of the group, nor was she asked to share her thinking on political questions. While people looked to and asked Mike and me for political direction in the group, she was usually ignored. Soon everyone came over to hear what April was saying. April put forward examples that she had just clearly explained to me and other men denied them as misunderstandings.

With both Nilou and April deeply frustrated and pulling back from the conversation, I restated the exact same examples given by April. My comments were followed with begrudging agreement from other men that perhaps these incidents were sexist and mistakes had been made. April called it out immediately and explained what was happening. Her ideas coming from me were heard and taken seriously, when they were dismissed coming from her just minutes before. There it was. I still didn't want to believe that sexism was happening, but now I saw it. I felt horrible, like a kick to the stomach. Nilou and April followed this up, trying to get the men to agree that there was a problem. How could this be happening? None of us wanted or intended to create these dynamics.

Two months later, I was sitting in a men's caucus—silent and scared. We didn't know what to talk about and could feel the collective anxiety building. Nilou and April had proposed that the UAF spend a day talking about sexism. We agreed to it, and they developed a plan. Our day began by separating into women's and men's groups to each talk about how we have been impacted by patriarchy and sexism; we would then come back together to talk about how to challenge sexism in the UAF. "What are they talking about?" we asked ourselves. We awkwardly tried to talk about sexism: "Why do we challenge racist jokes and laugh at sexist jokes?" But mostly we looked at our watches and waited.

The group reunited: women entered the room arm in arm energized by a powerful discussion; the men stood around, disheveled and nervous. The

women talked about their experience of sexism in the group, about ways that men demonstrated disrespect to women and undermined women's work in the group. They explored ways that sexism was pitting them against one another. They realized that some of them blamed other women who spoke for taking up all the space, when it was really sexism that denied them space as women and left them fighting each other for that five minutes out of an hour. There was jealousy between women based on who was dating men in the group, and this too was related to sexism. They discussed the dynamic that women who made out with men in the group had more access to discussions about the group and therefore had more information than other women, who then resented their position in the group. They talked about ways that they competed with one another for men's attention and how they looked to men as leaders in the group rather than each other.

It was quickly apparent that the men's caucus had not even scratched the surface of the kind of depth and honesty reached by the women's caucus. Rather than providing a meaningful report back, men began questioning what the women said. Without any sharing from men about our reflections on sexism, women were now defending the points they had made. I felt horrible and struggled to believe what I was hearing women say. "We need to just listen," was the most that I could contribute to the conversation.

Several people of different genders left early in tears, hurt and overwhelmed. The meeting had taken place at my parents' house, and my mom joined towards the end of the discussion. She asked to speak. "You're all taking on enormous issues and these issues are hard. It makes me happy to see you all at such young ages seriously take them on. It shows that you really believe in what you're fighting for and it's a conversation that doesn't happen in one day. I'm still working on these issues. You should be proud of yourselves for your courage and honesty." I could feel the heaviness in the room as we looked at each other, many with tears in our eyes and frustration on our faces. It was helpful to get perspective and realize that we weren't going to end sexism in one discussion. We committed to continue talking about sexism.

Over the next few months, an important development took place. We regularly read anarchist newspapers and zines from around the country as lifelines to a broader movement. We looked to other groups for examples and models to bring to our work. The journal *Free Society,* based in

Minneapolis, devoted an entire issue to articles about other anarchist groups' experiences dealing with sexism and internal power dynamics. We devoured the articles for a study group meeting and they transformed how we, men in particular, were relating to the discussion. "It's not that we're just fucked up—these issues are coming up in groups all over the country." Women used the articles to highlight what they had been telling us: "This is systemic, just like capitalism, and it's not just about you."

Through further discussion, we developed a higher level of unity about the need to challenge sexism and power inequality in our group as a key part of our overall work for social justice. Out of this process we developed a new focus in our work as the UAF.

Part II: Challenges and Lessons from Organizational Practice

While the United Anarchist Front was working on ways to challenge sexism and share power in our group we began working closely with Long Beach Food Not Bombs (FNB). People in the Long Beach group were a few years older than us and had more experience. Women in the group, particularly Camille Huidor, played prominent roles, were well read in anarchist theory and history, and became role models for us.

We decided to start a Whittier chapter of FNB, in part, to take on work that could help us share responsibilities and power in the group. We were trying to address the critique that men held all the power in the group and that this was, in part, because of the skills we had and our higher comfort level with theory and political analysis. Most of the responsibilities that we identified were making propaganda, maintaining the mail correspondence with anarchists from around the country, planning actions, and running the meetings. In retrospect, we were really struggling with who felt a sense of ownership over the organization, who felt confident and supported in representing the organization and guiding it forward. Men in the group regularly gathered to read anarchist theory, history, and news together, while women were overwhelmingly unsupported in pursuing similar study. Most of the visionary thinking about the group was held informally among male friends who then led the group in that direction. While being grounded in the politics of the organization is important, it was primarily about who felt confident in the role of moving the group forward and who had the social training to take charge and provide leadership.

FNB presented an opportunity for everyone to participate in a meaningful way. Members did not need to be well versed in anarchist classics by Kropotkin to collect, cook, and serve food.[3] Additionally, FNB was a proactive way of expressing our politics—critique of capitalism, vision of a cooperative society, and strategy of direct action to get there—through work that involved the whole group, rather than making a speech or writing a flyer. FNB created hundreds of opportunities for members of the UAF to talk with people in the community about who we were and what we

believed. There were also dozens of easily identifiable roles and responsibilities for people to take on, rotate, and share. Women played leading roles in FNB, and this positively shifted dynamics in the UAF. The other major reason for starting an FNB chapter was to raise consciousness about capitalism and poverty. The UAF regularly volunteered with a local food pantry that distributed food to hundreds of poor and working-class families and a few dozen homeless people in the community. We saw FNB as a vehicle to do concrete external work to challenge structural inequality in society.

Our activities built momentum, and more people began joining FNB. We had half a dozen articles about FNB and local homelessness in the *Whittier Daily News,* and we gained support from churches and community groups. We combined the fun of our social scene with political work by preparing meals on Saturday nights for the Sunday lunch serving. We were able to mobilize more people to demonstrations and rallies against police brutality and the growing right wing. We organized a local demonstration against neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan as part of a national day of action called by the Love and Rage Network. While our overall efforts become more effective, we faced new challenges in our efforts to challenge sexism and power inequality in our group. I am going to focus on three that proved particularly challenging.

First, some of us (of different genders) began to shy away from activities where sexism had manifested. For example, rather than changing the study group to find creative ways for everyone to feel supported and empowered in developing their political analysis, we de-emphasized the importance of having analysis and ended the formal study group. People continued to study politics in school, and on their own, but we largely moved away from trying to develop group analysis to guide our political work. This made it difficult for us to think long term about what we were trying to accomplish. It also meant that new people brought in through FNB didn't have a space to formally study our politics and develop their own larger analysis. It would have been helpful to ask people in other groups for help to think of ways to study and learn together in new empowering ways.

Second, a negative dynamic developed among some of the men who held a lot of the responsibilities and power in the group. A very crude conception of equality, based in a lot of fear and guilt, developed in which

no one had anything to teach anyone else because we're all equal, and to know more than someone else was an expression of inequality. Some men felt bad for having skills and experience, because it reflected the patriarchal power that privileges us to have those skills and experiences to begin with. Other men felt resentful of this dynamic and pulled away from the group. Women were pushed into positions of responsibility and given no orientation about how the work had been done and then little to no support to keep it going. My own logic went something like this: if you assume you need to teach someone how to do something, then you're assuming that they can't figure it out themselves. For me, the historic and institutional system of male supremacy was blurred into a very personalized and individualized understanding of patriarchy that led to guilt, frustration, and few possibilities to change organizational practices and culture. I was operating more from a fear of being sexist than having an understanding of how to practice feminism. We primarily had a list of what not to do, rather than what to do. But we were learning.

We began doing skill shares, where we spent an hour going over how to do something. This was a good step, but we needed a process of transferring skill and knowledge over time. Further, we needed to change the culture of our work. Frequently, it was assumed that women didn't already have skills to bring to the work and that they wouldn't be able to do a good enough job. This came across in numerous comments on the variation of "are you sure you can do that?" when women volunteered, while men with less experience received no such comments. A lesson from this dynamic was the need for proactive strategies and ideas for how men could undermine male supremacy, support women's leadership, and develop feminist leadership as men. Another lesson was that space needed to be given for women and new people, in general to take on responsibilities in a supportive and encouraging culture that passed on lessons, but also recognized that there isn't just one right way to do everything.

Third, we began to struggle with the question: "If we can't resolve these issues in our own group, then how can we change society?" We didn't have the skills or experience to put ourselves into a larger historical context and see our actions as part of a long-term process of social change. Some of us began to think that we had to create equality in our group first and then work for equality in society. Others argued that we needed to do both and

that the process of changing the conditions in society creates new possibilities for how we live and organize. However, as a group we generally saw our inability to end sexism as an organizational failure as opposed to seeing our ongoing commitment to challenging male supremacy as a strength to build on over the long haul. While the dynamics of sexism are always at play in a patriarchal society, we experienced them much more sharply as a result of our own personal and organizational shortcomings. We were sprinting to end sexism immediately, as we lacked an analysis and strategy to help pace ourselves with benchmarks and goals to help us stay on track and appreciate victories and growth along the way.

We continued to do our work as the UAF, and our FNB chapter continued to mature. We organized community support and beat city hall when they tried to ban our food servings at the local park. We brought in new people and we continued to have fun together. As the UAF, we worked against student fee hikes and for Ethnic Studies at the community college many of us attended. We took Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies classes together and continued to support one another's political growth. The UAF ended when people moved away and moved on to other projects. Whittier FNB continued for several years, with Sam Smotherman, one of many Christian anarchists in the UAF, playing a leading role helping to bring in a whole new group to continue the work. Many of them then went on to start the Los Angeles chapter of the Anarchist Black Cross, supporting political prisoners.

My experience with the UAF pushed me to recognize that Left activists need to go through a revolutionary process of our own while simultaneously working for revolutionary change in the world. The institutions of exploitation and domination have a logic that presents injustice as rational and natural. That logic is core to our identities across the gender spectrum and has profoundly different consequences. By identity I do not mean biology, but the political and economic process that socializes and positions us in this society, often against one another. Nilou challenged me to develop an understanding of who I am through a systemic understanding of the world, and then she expected me to work alongside her and others to transform this system—and in the process transform myself.

It was becoming clear to me and other men that challenging sexism was far more than learning how to make eye contact with women in group

discussions and asking them what they thought. Indeed, it was a political commitment to challenging a system of power that operates on political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological levels. My lack of eye contact is one of thousands of subtle ways that male supremacy enforces the worldview that women's work is insignificant, marginal, or non-existent. I learned later about the relationship of patriarchy and capitalism through socialist feminists like Maria Mies, whose book *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* was discussed in *Love and Rage*. Mies explained that this male supremacist understanding of women's work is key to the historic development of capitalism, as women's unpaid labor provided the foundation for capital accumulation. While I wanted to just stop being sexist, we were learning that this was part of a long-term collective struggle to transform the world in which we live.

This was the beginning of my understanding that people with privilege needed to go through a process of developing identity politics based on their privileged identities. The goal of this would be to develop analysis for people with privilege to understand themselves in relationship to both historical systems of oppression and systemic social change. These politics would be rooted in a commitment to collective action for revolutionary change. This would be a revolution against those systems that create three categories of people: people with economic and political power to shape, define and enforce social reality; those with economic and political privilege and access to institutions of power in that social reality; and those whose exploitation and oppression create the economic and political power in that social reality.[4]

This was also the beginning of seeing a clearer need for strategies of developing collective power between oppressed and privileged communities to build broader movements with a vision of collective liberation.

Part III: "What Historical Class Am I In?"

"Do you know what class you're in?" As a white, middle-class male taking Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies classes, I was asked that question a lot. In a Black Women's History class, someone offered to help me figure out which class I was looking for. I understood why people asked me and I understood that the question wasn't just about class as in a classroom, but class as a social category in a white supremacist, patriarchal, heterosexist, capitalist society that divides people unequally. I knew what class I was coming from and I knew that my relationship to Women's Studies and Ethnic Studies was complicated. I knew some people didn't want me in those classes and I knew that my very presence made others feel uncomfortable. Most of the teachers and some of the students told me that they were glad I was there. It helped me see how complex these struggles are and that there are no easy answers.

What I read and studied in college—including women of color feminism, Black liberation struggle, Chicano/a history, colonialism from the perspective of American Indian history, Western democratic theory, labor history and organizing, Marxism, queer theory, and anti-racism from the perspective of immigrant and refugee women—impacted me profoundly. Additionally, having people of color—and women of color in particular—instruct, guide, and grade me was incredibly important to my psychological development in ways that I was not aware of at the time. I had had few role models, authority figures, teachers, or mentors who were people of color while I was growing up. To have people of color, particularly women, with progressive/Left/radical politics lead my educational development was a subversive shift of the power relationships that, while not mentioned on the syllabus, was central to my studies.

I attended community college for four years and then went to San Francisco State University. I chose SF State because in 1968, its students had organized to win an Ethnic Studies department through a six-month student strike led by the Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front. Many of my professors had been involved in social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Student struggles had won institutional changes at colleges

around the country, and it was important to my education to remember that Ethnic or Third World Studies, Women's Studies, Labor Studies, Queer Studies, and other similar programs exist because of such effective student-led struggles.

Learning in a community of largely women and people of color also deeply impacted because it was the first time that I'd ever been in situations where I was a numerical minority on the basis of race or gender. Suddenly, race and gender weren't just other issues among many but central aspects of how others experienced and understood the world. The question I sometimes thought silently to myself—"Why do you always have to talk about race and gender?"—was flipped on its head: "How can you not think about race and gender all the time?"

Over time, I developed a strategy for my Ethnic and Women's Studies classes. I kept pretty quiet for the first month or so of class, pushing myself to really listen to the professor and other students (who often shared experiences from their lives that were very different from mine). However, it was also important for me to be clear about my reasons for being in the class early on. I looked for an opportunity to express my opposition to white supremacy and patriarchy (and sometimes capitalism) as systems of oppressions from which I benefited. This often happened in discussions of why we were taking this class. I was nervous and wanted to put it off to some other time, but my comments were generally met with a sigh of relief and a few smiles. It was not that saying this changed everything, but I understood it as my responsibility to try and build trust and be clear about my intentions. Some white people denounced Ethnic Studies as reverse racism and some men dismissed Women's Studies as training for "feminazis," while most white people and men remain silent. I knew that, as a white person and a man, I needed to consider the legacy of racism and sexism to which I am connected, and I needed to take this into consideration in how I related with other people. People often told me later that they were nervous that I was going to argue all semester that racism and sexism don't exist. This helped me think more about what it would mean to develop a white anti-racist and feminist male practice that could become a collective counterforce to the tradition of white racism and male sexism. Seeing myself in the context of history and possibility was critical for my development. Over the course of each semester, I participated in dialogue and pushed myself to fully engage

with the material by sharing my own experiences and thoughts as well. While I paid attention to these group dynamics, my focus was on developing a historical, institutional analysis of how power operates in society, lessons from past liberation movements, and theory to inform proactive strategies for today.

The other part of my school strategy was to participate and raise questions from an anti-racist and feminist perspectives in my Western Civilization, Political Science, and other white- and male-dominated classes. People of color and women with whom I worked were clear that this was something they felt I had a responsibility to do. "They expect it from us and dismiss us as angry, emotional, or stuck in victim mode. You need to use your privilege to get heard by white people and men." The goal wasn't to necessarily change the professors' perspectives, but to open up space for critical dialogues about race, class, and gender with the other students.

This was extremely educational for me, because frequently I came across as cold, angry, or self-righteous, none of which were particularly helpful. If my goal was yelling at men and white people to alleviate my own guilt and shame for being white and male, then this was perhaps a useful approach. However, if my goal was to actually encourage white people and men to embrace anti-racism and feminism, then I needed to be more complex and honest with myself so as to communicate from a place of love. I needed to take time to really understand my motivations. I needed to get grounded in an understanding of my self-interest in liberation. I often overcompensated for how nervous I was to raise points, and as a result focused more on what I was going to say than how I was communicating it. With practice, my approach changed and I became more grounded, self-confident, and open to dialogue. Understanding my motivation and my goals for anti-racist work with white people and feminist work with men led me to a longer term perspective on the work. I also felt less of a need to prove myself to people and could focus more on working with people.

My educational experience was often challenging. I grew up believing that I was a lone individual on a linear path with no past. History was a set of dates and events that, while interesting to learn, had little or no relationship to my life. I was just a person, doing my own thing. Then I started to learn that being white, male, middle-class, able-bodied, mostly heterosexual, and a citizen of the United States meant that I not only had

privileges but was rooted in history. I was part of social categories embedded in and shaped by history.

Part of being in those groups means being deemed "normal," the standard by which all others are judged. My images of just being "my own person" were now joined by images of slave ships, indigenous communities burned to the ground, families destroyed, violence against women, and white ruling-class men using white poor men to colonize peoples of color and the Earth.

I remember being in an African American women's history class, attended almost entirely by Black women. I was one of two white people, one of two men, and the only white guy in the class. We were studying slavery, Ida B. Wells's anti-lynching campaign, and the systematic raping of enslaved African women by white male slave owners—millions of rapes, sanctioned and protected by law. The professor talked about the history of white men who claimed to be protecting white women from Black male rapists and who lynched hundreds of Black men. I sat there with my head down and I could feel history in my stomach and in my eyes as they filled with tears. Who were those white men and how did they feel about themselves? I was scared to look into the faces of the Black women in that room. "While there is mixing of races because of love, our people are so many shades of Black," the professor said as she looked around the room, "because of generation after generation of institutionalized rape." I could hear other students crying, and I was scared wondering who and what kind of white man I would become.

I knew on an intellectual level that Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies come out of histories of struggle. But being in those classes helped me experience them as spaces to actively contest dominate ideology and create a counter-worldview based on anti-racist, feminist Left politics. It has been primarily people who look like me who are behind the efforts to shut these programs down.

Part IV: "This Struggle Is My Struggle"

> *"I haven't the faintest notion what possible revolutionary role white heterosexual men could fulfill, since they are the very embodiment of reactionary-vested-interest-power."*
> —Robin Morgan, from the introduction of *Sisterhood Is Powerful*

"Face your fear/ the fear is you/ you cannot run/ you cannot hide/ the fear is you/ in the end, what have you done/ can it be true that the damage you bring is greater than the good you make/ face your fear/ embrace your fear/ the pain inside has truth inside/ let it out/ let it out/ when the socialization is gone/ what is left/ where will you go/ what will you do/ let it all out and who will you be/ can I move forward/ can I move forward/ open it all up/ in your heart the hope is there/ in your heart the truth is there/ find it/ find it/ in this revolution there is a revolution for you/" —my punk rock anthem I sang to myself when having a "what if Robin Morgan is right?" moment.

I have gone through periods of hating myself, feeling guilty and afraid. I know in my heart that I have a role in liberation struggle, and I know that there is useful work to do. Still, though, the question, "Am I just fooling myself?" haunts me. That is, am I fooling myself to believe that I am more useful than problematic?

Robin Morgan's quote is useful to struggle with, but not to get stuck on. I meditate on this question from time to time, because I grew up believing that I was entitled to everything. I could go anywhere and do anything, and wherever I went, I would be wanted and needed. The revolutionary vision that drives me is for everyone to grow up believing they are wanted and needed. We want to build cooperative institutions so everyone has healthy food, good housing and healthcare, and communities in which all of us are raised in loving and supportive families and communities.

This, however, is not the case today.

Patriarchy taught me in ways both subtle and blatant that I was entitled to women's bodies, time, and energy and that I was entitled to take up space and express my ideas and thoughts whenever I wanted to, without consideration for others. This consciousness came out of the lived reality of growing up in a society that is indeed designed and built for people like me.

This is a very different reality and process of socialization than that of most people in this society—people who are told to shut up, keep it to themselves, hide who they really are, get out of the way, and never forget how lucky they are to be allowed here to begin with. I think it is healthy to not assume I am always needed, to learn to share space and power, and to work with others to realize the roles that I can and should play. What is unhealthy is how rare it is that gender-privileged men talk with each other about these issues and support each other through the process of challenging sexism and developing a healthy and loving feminist male identity and practice.

Laura Close, an organizer with Students for Unity in Portland, discusses this in her essay "Men in the Movement." She writes, "Every day young men wake up and decide to get involved in activism. Often they encounter language and discussions about their male privilege that alienate and silence them without anyone actually supporting them to decolonize their minds. Consider what it would be like for [an] ally man to take younger/newer guys out to coffee and talk about his own experiences as a guy in the movement. Talk about what you've learned! Consider what it would mean for men to cheer on other men who are making progress towards becoming allies."

She put out a challenge for men to mentor other men engaging in anti-sexist work. I knew she was right, but I was afraid of doing it. Sure, I had plenty of close gender-privileged friends, but to make a political commitment to develop relationships with other men and be open with them about my own struggles with sexism was terrifying. It was terrifying because I could handle denouncing patriarchy and calling out other men from time to time, but to be honest about my own sexism, to connect political analysis/practice to my own emotional/psychological process, and to be vulnerable is scary.

It would mean being vulnerable about my own internal struggles to actualize feminist politics in my daily life. In Women's Studies classes, I often got props for being there. The level of consciousness of feminism—let alone political commitment to it—among most gender-privileged men is so low that just reading one feminist book and saying "I recognize that sexism exists" meant that I was way advanced.

While the level of consciousness and commitment to feminism is generally higher among gender-privileged men in activist circles, it is not

that much higher. I have faced two major struggles throughout most of my political life: genuinely wanting to contribute to collective liberation struggle, and feeling a deep level of fear that I was not coming anywhere close to that commitment. It is far easier for me to make declarations against patriarchy in classrooms, political meetings, and in writing than it is to practice feminist politics in my personal relationships with friends, family, and partners.

What am I afraid to admit? That I struggle everyday to really listen to voices I identify as women's. I know my mind wanders more quickly. I know that my instant reaction is to take men's opinions more seriously. I know that when I walk into rooms full of activists I instantly scan the room and divide people into hierarchies of status (how long they have been active, what groups they have been part of, what they have written and where it's been published, who their friends are). I position myself against them and feel the most competitive with men. With those I identify as women, the same status hierarchies are tallied, but heterosexual desirability enters my mind. What is healthy sexual attraction and desire and how does it relate to my training to systematically reduce women's identities to sexualized objects? This gets amplified by the day-to-day reality that this society presents women as voiceless bodies to serve hetero-male desire. I am talking about almost never having zoned out on what a gender-privileged man is saying because I was thinking about him sexually. I have repeatedly found myself zoned out thinking about sex while listening to women who are organizers, leaders, visionaries, my friends, my comrades. I'm all about crushes, healthy sexual desire, and a pro-sex orientation. That is not what I am talking about. This is about power, entitlement, and women's leadership being marginalized by hetero male desire in a society that is violently misogynistic and male supremacist.

I wish I didn't get defensive on a regular basis, but I do. I get frustrated and shut down by conversations about how power operates between my partner and me. I get defensive about how the world interacts with us and how that influences our dynamics. I know that there are times when I say, "All right, I'll think more about it," when I am really thinking, "Leave me alone."

Male supremacy negatively impacts how I communicate with my partners, friends, and comrades. It negatively impacts how I want, express,

conceptualize, and make love. It negatively impacts how I live my life and how I organize. Male supremacy hurts men's relationships to themselves, to women and people of other genders, and to the earth. It has shaped our emotional lives so as to effectively advance a violent, militaristic, misogynistic, anti-queer, brutally competitive economic system. I am enraged by the resulting damage I see in men's lives all around me.

Patriarchy tears me up. I have so many fears about whether or not I am capable of being in healthy, loving relationships; fears about whether or not I can be genuinely honest and connected with myself so that I can then open up and share with others; fears about organizing to genuinely build and share power with others.

Every person I meet bears the scars of patriarchy. When I push myself to really look and take the time to think about how each of us is deeply impacted on a very different scale depending on our gender, sexuality, and experience, I'm filled with sadness. In her book *All About Love,* bell hooks writes that love is impossible where the will to dominate exists. Can I genuinely love? I want to believe I can. I want to believe in a political practice for gender-privileged men forged in opposition to patriarchy. A political practice informed by a systemic analysis that points to the hundreds of proactive steps and strategies to create anti-sexist male leadership. A political practice that moves men to meaningfully join with people of other genders in collective struggle to reorganize our society towards systemic liberation.

I do believe that as we struggle against oppression, as we practice our commitments, we actualize and express our humanity. There are moments, experiences and events when I see patriarchy challenged by all genders, and it shows what we can do. I believe that men must take on the struggle against patriarchy as a fight for our humanity.

And in this fight we, as men, will realize that even in the face of these systems of oppression, our love, beauty, creativity, passion, dignity, and power grows. We can do this and we need to love, support and take care of one another as we challenge, push, and encourage each other.

Conclusion: "We Must Walk to Make the Struggle Real"

While it's necessary to get into the hard emotional and psychological issues, there are also concrete steps men must take to challenge male supremacy. I was talking with a friend who does Palestine solidarity activism about ways that men can challenge male supremacy, and she said, "Gender-privileged people can offer to take notes in meetings, make phone calls, find meeting locations, do childcare, make copies and other less glamorous work. They can encourage women and gender-oppressed people in a group to take on roles men often dominate (e.g., strategic leadership in actions, MCing an event, media spokespeople). You can ask specific women if they want to do it, and explain why you think they would be good, as opposed to tokenizing just to get a woman to do it. Pay attention to who you listen to and check yourself on power-tripping."

She is one of thousands of women and gender-oppressed people who have outlined clear, concrete steps that people with gender privilege can take to challenge sexism and work for liberation. There is an abundant supply of work to be done. The larger question for me has been, "What will it take for me to actually do that work, to actually prioritize it and follow through on it?" In addition to men talking with each other, we also need to hold each other accountable to follow through. There are a lot of heavy emotional issues that come up in doing this work and it is critical that we keep each other from getting lost and help each other take concrete steps forward. Each of us must persistently ask ourselves how our work supports the leadership of women, how we are working to share power in our organizing, and how we are making ourselves open to hearing feedback from gender-oppressed people about our work. Each of these questions generates next steps to make it happen. Examining and challenging privilege is a necessary aspect of our work, but it's not enough. Men working with other men to challenge male supremacy is just one of many, many strategies needed to develop women-led, multiracial, anti-racist, feminist, queer and trans liberationist, working class-based, anti-capitalist movements for collective liberation. We know that sexism will work to undermine movement

building. The question is what work will we do to help build movement, and in the process expand our ability to love others and ourselves.

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1 The visibility and size of our cultural scene created opportunities and generated strong responses. Two moments in particular come to mind. The first is when two cheerleaders from the senior squad came to a party "to check it out" and their football player boyfriends stood in front of my parents' house refusing to come in because it was "full of communists and faggots." Half an hour after their arrival, the cheerleaders went outside, told their boyfriends that they were tired of being disrespected as women and broke up with them. While the cheerleaders returned to the party, exuberant and celebrating, the now ex-boyfriends refused to leave and began making threats to fight people. I went out, gave them a few beers and talked them down. The cheerleaders joined our community, their ex-boyfriends periodically tried to start fights, but we stuck together, stood our ground and deescalated the situation with claims that fighting was stupid and meaningless. Because there were so many of us, we had the motivation of our convictions, and we were organized, this worked, time and time again with a wide range of young men who tried to start fights with young men in our group. That said, another reason we were able to de-escalate was that some of us knew how to fight and we had a lot of support among the wider student body, including other football players, athletes, and punks who wouldn't shy away from a fight. On the second occasion, we were holding one of our weekly "revolutionary dance parties," with over fifty people, almost entirely teenagers, in the middle of a main street and public square. A truck full of guys in their twenties drove by yelling "faggots," over and over again. Most of us had no idea who they were. They eventually pulled up, jumped out of the truck with baseball bats and charged the dance party, yelling homophobic epithets. They said they just wanted to fight one person who they said was that "faggot" from their old high school. Immediately, we surrounded the person they wanted, and began pogo dancing (jumping up and down) around him, and he ducked down in the middle. We were scared that they would begin swinging those bats, but we stuck together and began chanting "No Violence!" as we danced to send a clear message and build the unity and energy of the crowd. We got louder and louder and our energy was electric. The guys with the bats left, disoriented and confused, denouncing us all as "fags" and we cheered and danced on. It was a powerful and exuberant experience, as many of us had experienced being threatened, intimidated, scared, and at times humiliated, based on our gender, sexuality, race, and/or politics when we were alone or in small groups. Experiences like this nourished us and attracted people to our politics and efforts.

2 We strongly identified with the politics of Love and Rage and the national network gave us a connection to something larger than ourselves. For more on Love and Rage, see *A New World in Our Hearts: Eight Years of Writing from the Love and Rage Federation,* ed. Roy San Filippo.

3 Peter Kropotkin, born in 1842 was one of the leading anarchist theoreticians of the anarchist movement from the 1880s until his death in 1921. He developed the theory of anarchist-communism and helped build an anarchist-communist movement around the world. His books *The Conquest of Bread* and *Mutual Aid* were studied widely. Kropotkin was studied in the UAF as well and we distributed several of his essays and books.

4 While I do not believe that society is neatly organized into these three distinct categories, it has been helpful as a general framework to help develop more realistic analysis of power.

“BY ALL MEANS, KEEP MOVING”

Towards Anti-Racist Politics and Practice

Part I: "Don't You Know What Color You Are?"

I was walking a picket line in front of the administration office at the community college I attended, and I could feel the anxiety and tension growing. I knew that it would be unpopular to speak up for Chicano Studies at Fullerton College in Orange County, California, but I didn't know just what to expect. I had been to countless protests and actions over the years. But I knew this was different, though I wasn't entirely sure why. That picket line, that experience of struggling for Ethnic Studies, of struggling for racial justice in a white supremacist society, was a catalyst that changed my life. It was a catalyst I had set out to find, even if I didn't know quite what I was looking for.

Two years earlier, in April of 1992, the Rodney King verdict was announced and the Los Angeles rebellion and riots ignited. It was the largest urban uprising in the United States in a generation and my post-civil rights movement colorblind framework was shattered. I remember watching TV as thousands began protesting at the LA police department headquarters and rioting erupted in South Central. I was full of anger and sadness about the verdict and wanted to join the protest. And as I watched the images of the riots, just thirty minutes from my house in the suburbs, it was like blinders being pulled away. Blinders that had hidden the realities of systemic racial and economic injustice, and I was horrified with what I was seeing. A group of friends, all white, gathered at my parents' house. We were anti-racists, and we had been to anti-police brutality demonstrations after the video of the Rodney King beating sparked national outrage. We were also raised white in a white supremacist society that so thoroughly normalizes racism, that one is called racist for mentioning race even exists. We were against neo-Nazis and racist cops, but it was far more difficult for us to see or make sense of the institutional racism that fundamentally shapes the economic, political, social, and cultural institutions of our society.

Our friend Terence Priester joined us. He was angry and devastated as well, but he was on the other end of racism and white privilege. He was the only Black person in our social circle, and in addition to his own lived

experience, he also drew inspiration and analysis from the history of the Black freedom struggle. He said that it was both really hard for him to be in a room full of white people and that he also needed to be with friends. But in order to be with us, he needed us to understand what the verdict meant for him. He talked about his experiences with racism and police, and shared stories like the time he was stopped and searched by the police on the way to his high school graduation. The police, he said, reminded him that even though he was the valedictorian of his mostly white class, he didn't really belong there. His stories and the conversations from that night had a deep impact on all of us.

Soon after that night, Terence gave me a book of short stories by Langston Hughes about a Black working-class family. In his inscription, Terence quoted Martin Luther King Jr.: "If you can't fly, run. If you can't run, walk. If you can't walk, crawl. But by all means, keep moving." This is an essay about catalyzing moments in my journey to "keep moving." As a young white activists looking for insights and inspirations on anti-racist Left organizing, I devoured books on movement history and longed for stories about activists' own process of coming to consciousness and into action. And I looked for opportunities to be part of and help build multiracial alliances. The goal of this essay is to support other white activists in their journey to "keep moving." I believe it is critical that white anti-racists share stories of mistakes, victories, and lessons, as part of an overall effort to create a culture that supports more and more white people to "keep moving" and be part of powerful multiracial movements for liberation. Stories from Mab Segrest's book *Memoirs of a Race Traitor* and *Race Traitor: The Journal of the New Abolitionism* gave me examples and hope. Both of which were needed as I stepped into my first multiracial organizing effort at Fullerton College.

The protest for Chicano Studies was part of a series of actions initiated by a student coalition that had formed a semester earlier in the spring of 1993. When the coalition first formed, the main priority was fighting back against student fee increases. The State of California was cutting the budget for higher education while the prison budget swelled, and the cuts were being transferred to students as fee increases. The coalition was largely made up of Chicano/a nationalists from MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, or Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán) along with the Black Student Union and white anarchists from the United Anarchist Front

(UAF), which was part of the Love and Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation. We linked the fee hikes and the cuts in education to the growing prison budget. California was ranked number one in prison spending and close to last in education spending. We did outreach using flyers to initiate conversations, led a couple of small actions to activate our members, generate publicity, and build energy on campus for a mass rally. We mobilized several hundred students to come to the rally (the largest rally the working-class commuter school had seen in years), and our speakers represented a broad range of student organizations based in many different campus communities. The rally demonstrated, in who spoke and what we spoke about, the multiracial alliances we had built and the larger vision of a democratic social justice campus from which we operated. In fact, the rally was so successful that it prompted retaliation from the administration. The majority of speakers at the rally were people of color, which reflected who was in the coalition. I was one of two white people who spoke at the rally and actively participated in the coalition. A week later, the other white student and I were called into the office of the dean of students.

I walked into the office, completely unaware of the reason why I was summoned. When I sat down, a security guard was sitting on each side of me. A secretary took verbatim notes of the meeting, making me feel like I was on trial. The dean of students informed me that I had been spotted vandalizing the school late at night with another white student from the coalition. The other student was part of MEChA, but didn't come to coalition meetings and I had never met her before. A custodian identified us from pictures taken during the rally. We had supposedly been seen wheat-pasting huge posters of Governor Pete Wilson wearing Mickey Mouse ears. While I liked the poster, I would have chosen something more clearly related to our campaign. While we both, individually, denied participation in the wheat-pasting, the dean told me that we would be fined and expelled, our class units would be made non-transferable, and we would be arrested at some point during the week while in class. I couldn't believe it. I left that meeting full of fear. I was scared and felt alone. David Rojas, the leading organizer in the coalition, who was also a mentor to me, found me and adamantly declared that we were going to fight this. "They are trying to divide us," he said. He went on to explain that the administration targeted us for two reasons: they assumed that it was the two white people who were

leading the coalition, and they were afraid of multiracial organizing. It took me a while to understand why the administration would think that it was the white people in the lead.

We put flyers out everywhere. Each time we explained what the administration was doing, we felt more confident, more powerful. We were defining the debate and going on the offensive. We started up an underground newspaper called the *Molotov Cocktail* (with the tagline "Serving one up for authority everywhere"). The school newspaper, the *Hornet,* loved us. They printed weekly articles quoting from the *Molotov Cocktail* and ran guest editorials and letters to the editor written by members of the coalition and the UAF. Our demand to stop all fee hikes was widely supported by the student body. The dean of students eventually apologized for his accusations and nothing happened to the other student or me. This was not the last time the administration would try to divide our multiracial alliance, but for now we were stronger and more united than ever.[1] The semester was coming to an end. We had done some great work.

Towards the end of the semester, ads began appearing regularly in the school newspapers about how fee hikes were the result of "illegal aliens" invading California. At the same time, student actions on other campuses were taking place to create, defend, or expand Ethnic Studies programs. At UCLA, students had occupied an administration building and then launched a successful hunger strike. David, a working-class anti-authoritarian Chicano Nationalist, suggested that members of MEChA and the UAF form a summer study group and read Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States.* Both groups agreed to do it.

We assigned a chapter between each meeting and planned to meet weekly. Our first session was half MEChA, half UAF. We didn't have a plan beyond open discussion of what we thought of each chapter. We were scattered. Some participants jumped into explaining what they thought about a section, while many others had not read it and had no idea what the conversation was based on. We didn't have a facilitator or an agenda, not because we didn't want them, but because we didn't have a plan. Our interest in a study group exceeded our experience and skill level to run one. Twenty-five people came out for the second session, and again we had no plan beyond open discussion. People were hungry to learn, but no one stepped

into the role of teaching or leading a process by which people could genuinely share what they knew. Without focus, energy dissipated, and most people never came back. A few of us in the UAF continued reading it and discussed it in person at the local coffee shop or over the phone.

While the study group didn't reach the potential we hoped for, reading Zinn was a powerful experience for those of us who finished it. Reading about the histories of race, class, and gender oppression and resistance in the United States was transformative. One of David's goals with the study group was to build energy in the coalition to fight for Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies generally and Chicano Studies in particular, and this goal was met. I had already taken the only Black Studies class and Women's Studies class offered, and was enrolled in Chicano Studies. Many of us in and around the UAF were taking these classes together and they had a profound impact on us. Simultaneously, all around us in California, student-led struggles for Ethnic Studies were taking place. As the coalition talked about this change in our campaign, it didn't occur to me that shifting from fee hikes to Chicano Studies was also going to shift how people reacted to us—white people in particular. We were going from one important demand to another, and I thought people would continue supporting us. In retrospect, I was really naive about the significance of this decision. But I quickly learned.

On September 16, 1993, a rally had been called for Chicano Studies. Busloads of high school students and college students from other campuses were going to come to Fullerton College for a march. David Rojas and I created a special issue of the *Molotov Cocktail* (an 11×14 double-sider with three articles and graphics). We wrote:

> Last semester, much of our focus was directed on the rights of education for all. While we will continue with this struggle, it is also equally important that we fight for a quality education. We, as students, must remember that this is OUR education and that we must have a role in shaping the education process. Fullerton College does not meet up to the state and federal affirmative action guidelines and this affects us and our education. If there are classes that are not available to us, then we must demand them. We must reclaim our history! We must reclaim our education!

We included statistics as well: Of the previous fifty-six people hired, only six were people of color. The college population was 57 percent Anglo, 22 percent Chicano/a, 12 percent Asian Pacific Islander, 3 percent African American, and 1 percent American Indian. There was not one full-time African American professor on the entire campus.

The rally happened, hundreds of students showed up, and the energy was high. There were Mexican flags and speeches in Spanish. The students began to march into the streets of Orange County. It was energetic and peaceful. Police in full riot gear were everywhere. The police surrounded the students and ordered them to end the march. Shortly thereafter, the police attacked the students with pepper spray and batons. High schoolers and college students, almost entirely Latino/a, were hit and sprayed as they ran back to campus.

I missed the march. I had left the rally early to go to work. It was a critical mistake on my part to have left—regardless of work. I should have been there. But I hadn't realized the significance of this march. I though of it as just one of many marches, and I'd been to dozens. But the reality is this: when Latino/a students take to the streets of Orange County, or anywhere in this country, it is different than when mostly white activists do it. The threat of communities of color mobilized is enormous and it scares the police to their bones. I had read about white supremacy and called myself an anti-racist, but translating that into a way of understanding and acting in the world was a much longer process.

The reaction on campus to the student march for Chicano Studies was overwhelmingly negative. The school paper denounced the rally and march as being "anti-white," "angry," "provoking violence," and "counterproductive." The administration, the school paper, and the overwhelming majority of white students blamed the student coalition for the violence. Some called for MEChA's funding to be cut, arguing that it was a "hate group." Others blamed the *Molotov Cocktail,* saying that our encouragement to take the streets had urged young students to use violence. Very few outside of the coalition denounced the police violence.

For weeks, there was constant debate on campus about Ethnic Studies. "We're not protesting to have white studies," we were told over and over again. "Chicano Studies is exclusive and narrow," we were informed. As a white student taking Chicano Studies, I tried to talk with other white

students about it. I argued that Chicano Studies, like Western Civilization class, was something for all of us to take. A lot of white students responded with things like, "The books I read are written by white people, because that's who writes and that's not my fault." I would argue back that this is how white supremacy operates: whiteness is universalized as the norm of what is. It does not require a conscious decision to have thoughts that are racist, as it is racism that shapes the structure of our thought. "It is not my fault that Black people do not write books." "It is not my fault that most of what is important was done by Europeans and European Americans." "I believe that all people are created equal, but it is not my fault that white people just do more." "We are not studying white people, we are studying the presidents of the United States, and it is not my fault that they all happen to be white." White supremacy is the tide that directs the flow of our thoughts. It does not require us to go out of our way to be racist. It just requires that we go with the flow of dominant ideology. I found it hard to even explain myself. I heard myself saying things that I knew other white people weren't connecting with, but I didn't know how else to say them and I didn't want to remain silent.

David and others in MEChA encouraged me to see my job in the coalition as trying to talk with white students, and in the process build support for our work among white people. They gave me support to keep trying and not give up. I wrote articles for both the *Molotov Cocktail* and the *Hornet,* and began identifying myself as white in my writing and when I spoke. I did this because white students wanted to say that this was just a bunch of "crazy Mexicans," members of the "hate group" MEChA. Furthermore, they often spoke as though they were raceless, normal students. They spoke with an air of authority, as though they represented normal society. I was claiming white identity to counteract those arguments, with the goal of creating a different debate. I wanted to put forward a different voice among white people, to break down the idea that this was fight between Brown people and white people, and to create a visible alternative position other white people could take.

The coalition called for a picket at the administration building to pressure the president to hire more professors of color and expand Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies. We put out another issue of the *Molotov Cocktail* with articles about the history of white supremacy. I had asked a

friend of mine from another school who had taught me a lot about the Black liberation movement if he could write something about Ethnic Studies as a Black student. I also asked white students who worked alongside the UAF to write articles about why they support Chicano Studies. We handed out the new issue and promoted the next demonstration for Ethnic Studies.

By the time I was in the picket line in front of the administration building, I could feel how important to was to visibly take a stand. I was the only white person in the picket line. A white friend of mine was about to join me, but when he saw the picket line of thirty people, almost entirely Latino/a, surrounded by hundreds of angry white students, he left because he was afraid. I was nervous, too. By this point, our student coalition, which had once enjoyed popular support was being denounced from all sides. The school paper slammed us for having abandoned "student demands" (fee hikes) and taking on "exclusive and divisive self-interest demands" (Chicano Studies). We had little visible support for our protest and dozens of white students were yelling things at us like "Go home" and "We're not fighting for white studies." It felt like everything was in slow motion. I could hear white students screaming at me: "What are you doing with them?" "Don't you know what color you are?" "You fucking traitor!" It was surreal. I was really scared, but I knew strongly that I was on the right side of this picket line.

The picket line has weighed heavy on my mind over the years. It made me realize that being white is significant. It also made me question what being white meant. Why were those students yelling, "Don't you know what color you are?" I began to realize that white supremacy is all about creating and maintaining relationships of power based on skin color. I had read about it, but this was one of my first conscious experiences of it. White privilege is granted to white people on the condition that they maintain loyalty to this system. It doesn't require being an active racist per se, but just going with the flow. For standing in solidarity with Latino/a students, I was being called out as a traitor—I was threatened with physical violence from those white students. Now I wonder about the other people who were in that picket line. I was being denounced for organizing with Latino/a students, but I have no way of understanding what it was like for them. For me, it was directly experiencing the reality of racism. David broke the situation down for me: "This is what happens to us all of the time. You're being yelled at for standing with us. We get this and worse day in and day out for being us." He

didn't say it explicitly, but I was beginning to understand what was also a subtext to our conversation: I could leave this struggle anytime I wanted to. They couldn't stop being Latino/a. But David wasn't trying to motivate me by guilt. He was clear that I needed to be in this struggle for my own liberation, and he pushed me to figure out what that meant.

Part II: Movement Building and Challenging White Supremacy

"We shut down the WTO!" I could hardly believe it when the news was spread via messengers and mobile phones. Our blockades, our creative resistance, and our commitment to the earth and to justice had stopped the World Trade Organization. November 30, 1999, was also a day that changed my life. I went to Seattle and joined with my affinity group of mostly San Francisco Food Not Bombers. After years of using consensus decision-making, practicing civil disobedience, and utilizing direct action, it was amazing to see it come together on such a massive scale in Seattle.

Shortly thereafter, I read the essay "Where was the Color in Seattle: Looking for Reasons Why the Great Battle Was So White" by Elizabeth 'Betita' Martínez. It struck a chord with me. For years, I had studied how race, class, and gender have played out in social movements throughout history. Racism and sexism have narrowed and undermined the labor movement. White women suffragists of the late 1800s used racism to secure the vote for white women. The sexism of the anti-war student movement catalyzed the feminist movement. This history is vast and full of racism and other forms of oppression undermining movements for social change. When I read this history, I would think about organizing today and how to actively challenge these barriers and obstacles to movement building. When Martínez called out the ways that racism operated in Seattle, it was a profound awakening and opening. Her essay helped put Seattle and the global justice movement into a bigger picture and showed how white supremacy and white privilege create divisions within the movement today.

After Seattle, I spent a lot of time trying to figure out where to go next. I had graduated from San Francisco State University the previous May and was in the process of transitioning out of my organizer role in Food Not Bombs. For the previous two years, I'd been focusing more on developing as a writer. My overall goal with both writing and organizing was to bridge race, class, and gender analysis of power with anarchist theory and practice. I knew that I wanted to focus on political education to create space for

activists to study history and theory and learn organizing skills. In the middle of trying to make sense of what direction to move in, I had a dream.

It was a dream about power and the effects of internalized superiority on my mind. The effect that white privilege has on white people is a developed sense of internalized superiority over people of color. It need not be conscious, or spoken of directly. Rather, white supremacy develops a framework of thought. It is related to the way that male privilege generates in men a sense of male superiority over women. In this case, guys can argue that men and women are equal, but still define reality through the perspective of male privilege (i.e., "It's not my fault that most of the good books out there are written by men and that men do the most radical activism").

My dream was about a party of my friends. I was the only white, male, middle-class, and (mostly) heterosexual person at the party. There were women of color, transgendered people, queers, older people, working-class people, and me. In the dream, there were two lines of thought going through my head. The first was straight up white supremacy, patriarchy, and heterosexism telling me that my friends were not good enough as people. Every imaginable hateful word flooded my mind. This calm, yet stern voice just repeated, "You know that these people are inferior, you just can't admit it."

The other line of thought in this dream was that egalitarian relationships of power and respect were both necessary and right, and that these were my friends, people whom I care about, people who teach me a lot, and whom I'm lucky to have in my life. When I thought about this, about mutual respect and basic equality, my eyes dulled and my jaw dropped, and in my dream I turned into what looked like a zombie. When my thoughts returned to the "inherent deficiencies" of my friends, my eyes became clear and, over and over again, I heard the voice repeating, "Now you are facing the truth." I woke up drenched in sweat, trying to catch my breath.

I spent several days trying to make sense of that nightmare. I kept thinking about consciousness, and about how race, class, and gender oppression create both internalized inferiority and internalized superiority. It was hitting home that it's not just opposing racism, you have to work to undermine the impact racism has on your way of seeing and being in the world. White privilege functions in this way to both conceal and perpetuate

racism: "It is not that you are worse than me, it's just that I'm better than you." My dream was about facing the truth of how domination distorts and disfigures one's humanity in a complex web of relationship based on oppression, privilege, and power. It led me to start writing and thinking much more about the process of decolonization for those who have been socialized to be in positions of privilege. For years, I've looked to the writings of women of color feminists like Barbara Smith, bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, Patricia Hill Collins, Elizabeth 'Betita' Martinez, Karin Aguilar-San Juan, Chinosole, Minoo Moallem, Audre Lorde, Cherríe Moraga, and Angela Davis for wisdom, inspiration, and guidance. I began struggling analytically to use the concepts, tools, insights, analysis, and perspectives of women of color feminism to undermine internalized white superiority, unmask white privilege, and recognize paths for people with systemic privilege to work towards a healing and healthy humanity. The question on my mind was: what does anti-racist work look like for white people and how do we do it?

I had been going to an anti-racism study group for about six months. Sharon Martínas, of the Challenging White Supremacy (CWS) workshop, put the study group together. It was a mostly white study group looking at anti-racism organizing in predominantly white communities. My favorite things about it were that it was multigenerational, and that we were of multiple political perspectives—feminist, Marxist, anti-imperialist, and/ or anarchist.

Sharon Martinas had been doing anti-racism workshops and trainings in the Bay Area for over six years. The CWS workshop was designed as two fifteen-week sessions: CWS for activists, followed by CWS for organizers. CWS was a crucial movement institution in the Bay Area that placed hundreds of participants in dozens of people of color-led economic and racial justice organizations. Sharon did this to bring volunteer capacity to those groups, train white activists in concrete ways of supporting organizing in communities of color, and help build up the multiracial Left. Additionally, CWS alumni, numbering well over a thousand, were a strong network of white anti-racists in the Bay Area and nationally. One day on the way back from a study group session, Sharon asked if I would be interested in developing a CWS workshop series together, specifically for organizers in the global justice movement. Both Sharon and I had been deeply inspired by

Martinez's essay, and we began putting together a workshop called "Beyond the Whiteness in Seattle: Challenging White Supremacy in the Movements against Global Capitalism."

The workshop spanned four sessions. We met on Tuesday nights during the summer leading up to the 2000 Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Los Angeles. We used role-plays, small group exercises, presentations, and discussions to look at how white supremacy impacts our work, and we studied assigned readings between sessions. We broke white supremacy down into both racial oppression against communities of color and white privilege for white communities. We analyzed white privilege and racial oppressions as two sides of the same coin, both maintaining systematic inequality that punishes the majority of the planet and its inhabitants in the service of profit and power. We stressed the importance of overcoming feelings of guilt around racism and the need for action based on the analysis that non-ruling class whites are both privileged and oppressed.

I was really nervous doing this first series of workshops. Having been one of the few white people in Ethnic Studies courses and often one of the only men in Women's Studies classes, I was used to having people question my motivations and intentions. I was used to people wondering, "What the hell is that white guy doing here?" This time, my nervousness stemmed in part from fearing that people would wonder, "What the hell is this white guy doing co-training a course on anti-racism?" In fact, people *were* thinking this, and frankly I'd have been worried if no one did. I believe facing contradictions and difficult situations that make you feel awkward and vulnerable is necessary in this work.

It was critical to go through this experience with a mentor, and I was fortunate to have two. Sharon Martinas, with whom I co-trained, and who is an incredible educator and organizer, and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, who was hosting the workshop in her house. Roxanne is a longtime radical historian, author, and activist who has spent years doing anti-racist and feminist work. She grew up poor and working-class in Oklahoma, the daughter of a landless white farmer and a half-Indian mother. She started a group called Cell 16 in the late '60s that helped launch the women's liberation movement. Roxanne was also active in the anti-war movement and worked with the American Indian Movement. She continues doing solidarity work with indigenous groups around the world fighting for self-determination. She has

also been researching and writing about the impact of white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism on white people, and wrote the memoir *Red Dirt: Growing Up Okie.* I was glad we were meeting at Roxanne's house, as she was the one who convinced me to go to Seattle and actually bought me a plane ticket to make sure I went. She told me that it would change my life, that all of the years of day-to-day organizing with Food Not Bombs would manifest on the streets, and that I needed to be there. She was right, and that experience led directly to the anti-racism training we had organized at her house, preparing for the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles.

Going to the DNC was a powerful experience, and it reconfirmed for me the importance of white people doing anti-racist work. The workshops that Sharon and I organized were directed primarily at other white activists, and activists of color were always welcome to participate. We did this out of a belief that white radicals have a responsibility to talk about and work on racism with white people, and that it is not the responsibility of activists of color to school white people. In Los Angeles, well-thought-out organizing was happening that actively combined international issues of global capitalism with local struggles for justice. Many of the local struggles were led by organizations of color. There was a lot of confusion and debates among activists who had come from around he country, about how the actions in L.A. went down. Why were there legally permitted marches? Why weren't people doing massive civil disobedience? This brought me back to thinking about the protests for Ethnic Studies in Orange County: specifically, that action taken by people of color is different than what white activists generally do. The stakes are higher, and calls for justice in communities of color fundamentally challenge the logic of white supremacy that says that people of color do not deserve justice. I saw how important it was for white anti-racists to talk with other white activists about this in L.A.

After the four-part workshop series, Sharon asked me to be the co-coordinator of CWS and work with her on a six-part series of "Beyond the Whiteness" with a larger number of participants. She also suggested that I develop one-time workshops for activist groups and conferences around the country. To help prepare me for this role, we spent hours together reflecting on lessons from our past organizing experiences, discussing the role of political education in movement building, and evaluating a wide variety of educational techniques and curriculums. While Sharon talked about lessons

from history, her focus was on helping me think strategically and critically by asking me questions and giving me space to explore and develop my own ideas. She shared her own thinking as well as lessons learned from past mistakes and successes. She offered me encouragement, helped me develop a plan, and provided resources to help implement that plan. The one-time workshops I began leading around the country were really successful at getting people excited about this work and developing useful skills and analysis. Out of the six part workshop series, an ongoing discussion group formed. The group's goals were to form a community of learning, have a peer group of organizers to look at how to incorporate anti-racism into our projects, groups, and campaigns, and to train people to do workshops themselves (including skills like creating agendas and exercises, facilitating discussions, and creating empowering group dynamics). The discussion group also helped develop a community of anti-racist activists to be part of CWS, including the new project that I was leading to work with the global justice movement nationally. That new effort became Catalyst Project.

One of the tactics utilized in the workshop that was extremely useful for others and myself was the "each one, teach one" model. Sharon and I met with people one on one and talked about anti-racism and people's organizing projects, and offered feedback and help when useful. It was used extensively in the Southern civil rights movement as a way not only to teach people and bring them into the movement, but also as a process of developing relationships, trust, and respect. For me, this is an extremely helpful way for us to grow as a movement and for us to deepen the work that we do. Mass actions and mass mobilizations are necessary, but we also need to do the day-to-day work of sharing skills and building our capacities as organizers and radicals. That's one of the biggest lessons of Seattle for me: that it's not just about large numbers of people, but that we can all be active participants in the movement.

Our strategy, as CWS, was to do anti-racist training and organizing specifically with predominantly white grassroots social justice activists. We also worked from the belief that multiracial, anti-racist alliance building is at the core of doing this work. Our focus on anti-racism with other white people was part of a long strategy of working towards multiracial, anti-racist movement to oppose capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and heterosexism.

To further this long-term strategy in the global justice movement, several of us in the movement, started up a grassroots network called Colours of Resistance (COR). Helen Luu, a working-class anarchist immigrant organizer, initiated a conversation with Pauline Hwang, a middle-class student organizer, and myself about our shared goals for a stronger anti-racist commitment and practice in the mostly white anti-global capitalism movement. We also wanted to see a higher level of mostly white groups working towards multiracial alliances with community-based organizations. Helen worked in Toronto and Pauline in Montreal. We exchanged e-mails about our backgrounds, politics, experiences, and visions, and developed goals for a project to help amplify the anti-racist voices in the global justice movement and help connect people with a shared analysis. We drafted a vision statement, launched a webpage, started up an e-mail discussion group and recruited people to join it, and were all involved in local work that reflected our politics.

We conceived of COR as a network for organizers of color working in communities of color around these issues who wanted to be in relationship with white anti-racists doing anti-racism work with predominantly white groups. COR is intended to facilitate people supporting one another, sharing experiences and lessons, learning about work in other areas, and developing strategy together. We intended this framework to provide a way for radicals of color and white radicals to build relationships based on respect, trust, and friendship while working for shared goals.

Although COR started as a relatively small group of a couple dozen people, our goal was not related to numbers, but rather publicizing our strategy and putting anti-racist, multiracial alliance building politics out into the broader movement. So while I was doing workshops and trainings, others connected to COR were working with local groups doing teach-ins and educational work on the impacts of global capitalism on communities of color, and on resistance from communities of color to global capitalism. Doing alliance building work with radicals of color who we have political affinity with is critical for white anti-racists, as white activists cannot and should not do this work alone.

My experiences organizing with David and MEChA, leading CWS with Sharon, and creating COR with Helen and Pauline demonstrated ways anti-racist strategies could help us build the movement we needed. Those

experiences also helped me reflect on missed opportunities in the past. For example, when I was in high school, working with the United Anarchist Front, we put out dozens of informational flyers, published an underground newspaper, and held protests against everything from apartheid in South Africa to the Gulf War. We did good work and while we were able to mobilize some of our peers, we talked often about how apathetic the school was and how great it would be to work with a wider range of people. Years later, I was looking at a copy of our high school newspaper. I wrote a regular column called "Love and Rage" (named after the anarchist network we were part of and the newspaper it produced) about activism and politics. Right next to my column was a guest editorial written by three Latina women protesting that lack of coverage of the Latino/a student population. They also called attention to the lack of coverage in the yearbooks and the school videos, and the overall disinterest shown by white students in activities organized by the Spanish language club, Expanded Horizons. Here were students who were angry and ready to take action about issues impacting them on the campus.

I found their column years later going through old papers. I don't remember reading it at the time and was totally surprised to see it. I wondered how we could have not noticed it. In retrospect, I think that the issues of language and culture and representation they were raising didn't register for me. Their issues weren't "radical" as I would have defined them in high school. This is an example of how white privilege shaped my worldview and hurts the ability of white radicals to see other people and struggles. I remember that we once thought about translating one of our flyers into Spanish, but we certainly didn't think that we might have something to learn from those students about conditions in the school, about racism on campus, or about what issues to organize around on a campus over one-third Latino/a. How radical would it have been if a group of white high schoolers worked in solidarity with a group of Latino/a high schoolers to demand an end to racism on campus! In a state like California, where a majority of voters have passed anti-immigrant rights and anti-bilingual education measures, such solidarity and anti-racist activism would have had a big impact.

Doing anti-racist work as a white person doesn't mean not making mistakes, but rather that we are committed to doing this work, even though

we will make mistakes. I'm continuing to do anti-racist organizing because I have hope for our abilities to make history and transform this society. I have hope because there is a radical vision of love at the heart of our movement and it is growing. There is a long history of white supremacy undermining movements, but together we can make anti-racism a catalyst for building ours. Our movement is built day-by-day, with visions of the world we want to see.

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1 The following semester the administration again tried to break the multiracial alliance in the coalition. The president of the school called MEChA leaders to a meeting. The president, who is white, had never called a meeting with MEChA before and stood against all the demands of the coalition. He served them lunch and said he wanted to warn them that MEChA's future funding might be jeopardized by working with anarchists. Furthermore, he warned that MEChA's reputation was at risk as word was spreading that they were being led by white anarchists. The MEChA members immediately came laughing to us with the news. The next issue of the *Molotov Cocktail* covered this story, and included the line, "The anarchists want to meet next, they're vegetarian, and they want beer."

AGAINST PATRIARCHY

Tools for Men to Help Further Feminist Revolution

While patriarchy is firmly intact in our society, there are nonetheless more men today influenced by feminism than at any other time in history. Feminism has positively influenced millions of men's thinking about women's roles in society; freedom of sexual and gender expression; equality for LGBTQ communities; consensual sex practices; ending domestic violence against adults and children; shared paid and unpaid labor within the family; men's roles in parenting and child raising; women's rights over their own bodies; and the overall need to challenge institutional and interpersonal gender inequality. The organizing efforts of anti-sexist men around the world have most visibly targeted rape and patriarchal violence.[1] There have also been a growing number of men doing political education on anti-sexism and feminism.[2]

While feminism as a commitment to end gender inequality and sexism is widely understood as core to an overall progressive Left agenda, sexism within the movement and in our communities is pervasive. While many activist men have deep resistance to challenging their own male privilege and recognizing the impact it has on the movement and our communities. Throughout our movement, women and gender-oppressed people spend a consider amount of time dealing with the negative impacts of male privilege. Every day, in hundreds of ways, women and gender-oppressed people's leadership in our communities and movement has to take on, resist, persevere, and overcome sexism within the movement, sexism that is after directly trying to undermine their leadership. And often, they are doing this anti-sexist work with little to no support from men. Given that we live in a patriarchal society in which men have internalized male supremacy and male privilege is embedded, reinforced, and supported in the institutions and culture of society, it is a given that men will reproduce sexism in their

daily lives. Therefore, if men are to develop feminist consciousness and practice along with a feminist vision and strategy of change in society, it can't be left to an "every man for himself" approach, rather it requires organized collective efforts. However, outside of groups organized against gender-based violence, men on the Left rarely support one another or create formal processes to develop feminist analysis, incorporate feminism into their organizing and personal practice, challenge male privilege and sexism within the movement, or organize other men into a vision, strategy, and culture that centralizes feminism. Far too often in the movement, women and gender-oppressed people are left to not only deal with the brunt of male privilege, but also to educate, challenge, support, and push, often reluctant, men to change. Over and over again, where action would be taken to address racist dynamics in activism, sexism goes unnamed and unchallenged. Over and over again, gender analysis of the issues we work on, and feminist strategies of change are marginalized in our political education, campaigns, and organizations. This can and must change. One of the key ways to make this change is for more and more men in the movement to understand and embrace the responsibilities and opportunities of actively organizing men into feminist politics and practice. Once we come to terms with the fact that unless activist men go through a conscious process of becoming feminists and are supported to take feminist action they will reproduce sexism in the movement and reinforce patriarchy in society, then we can focus our energy on creating these processes. Men today can join with women and other gender-oppressed peoples already leading these efforts, learn from those who have gone before us, and help further feminist revolution in powerful and visionary ways.[3] However, in order for those of us who are men to organize other men in large numbers to join in feminist struggle, we need to explore some of the challenges we face while also collecting tools to help us be successful. This essay is a contribution towards that effort.

Over the past two decades, as I have looked for direction and inspiration as a men struggling to make sense of what it means to be part of feminist revolution, bell hooks has consistently given me both. hooks, a Black feminist socialist intellectual, has written extensively about men and feminism and has been a major influence in my life and the lives of many

men. It is only fitting to then bring her into this essay directly. She writes, "When women and men understand that working to eradicate patriarchal domination is a struggle rooted in the longing to make a world where everyone can live fully and freely, then we know our work to be a gesture of love." She continues, "Let us draw upon that love to heighten our awareness, deepen our compassion, intensify our courage, and strengthen our commitment."

Over the years, it has been vitally important for me to root my feminist politics in this love. For me, and many other men, love is rarely one of the emotions we experience in the process of coming to feminist consciousness and beginning to take action. Men often experience a perfect storm of fear of being called out as sexist, shame and anger for the pain and hurt patriarchy causes in the lives of so many of our loved ones, joined with guilt and anxiety not knowing what to do while already feeling like a failure. All of this leads to isolation, often with men fearing that any moment they will be exposed as "feminist fakes," without role models to help them chart a path forward as feminist activists, leaders, and organizers.

One of the long term negative impacts of patriarchy on men is a culture that socializes us to be emotionally cut off and isolated, not only from others but from ourselves. Many of us have turned to alcohol, drugs, and reckless and violent behavior as ways to deal with the emotionally damaging impacts of patriarchy, capitalism, white supremacy, and other systems of oppression on our lives. In social justice movements, this can also look like fronting that we know more than we actually do, projecting our own damaged self-worth onto others by tearing them down, and workaholic behavior that sacrifices balance and produces burn-out work culture. The love bell hooks writes about reminds us that being challenged to confront sexism is really a challenge to build healthier and more meaningful relationships, communities, liberation efforts, and lives—for all of us.

As men, patriarchy devastates our relationships, communities, liberation efforts, and our lives. While we did not choose to be men in a patriarchal society, we have the choice to be feminists and work against sexism. Feminist commitment calls on us to challenge sexism and bring feminist values into our lives, families, social justice efforts, and in our communities.

For many of us, making a deeper commitment to feminism has come as a result of seeing, or been made aware of, the negative impacts of patriarchy

in the lives of people who we love: survivors of domestic violence, laws, policies, and media that denigrate working-class mothers and mothers of color; loved ones who have been told since childhood, in subtle and blatant ways, that their lives do not matter; women and genderqueer people in our movement whose leadership is undermined by sexist dynamics in society and our movement itself. The list goes on. Further, we have found the violence of patriarchy directed against us when we have stepped outside the box of what a man is supposed to be. Because of our sexuality, gender expression or politics, or because we were a convenient target for another man to prove his masculinity, we have been insulted, intimidated, unloved, or treated with physical violence. Often that man feared becoming a target himself, and often we have been "that man" ourselves, moving from target to bully and back again, as patriarchal masculinity needs to be proven over and over (even at times turning feminist politics into a weapon "conscious" men use against other men in the movement). Many men today who bring critically important feminist leadership to the movement and beyond have personal experiences of being targets of sexism, while also facing oppression as transgender men.

While men come to feminist consciousness by many paths and oppose patriarchy in a number of ways, most of us struggle to understand what it means to be feminist men. In her essay "Feminist Masculinity," bell hooks writes

> What is needed is a vision of masculinity where self-esteem and self-love of one's unique being forms the basis of identity. Cultures of domination attack self-esteem, replacing it with a notion that we derive our sense of being from dominion over another. Patriarchal masculinity teaches men that their sense of self and identity, their reason for being, resides in their capacity to dominate others. To change this males must critique and challenge male domination of the planet, of less powerful men, of women and children. But they must also have a clear vision of what feminist masculinity looks like.

From my own experience, and from working with hundreds of men of many different backgrounds around the country, I know that male privilege is deeply rooted and that many of us have a powerful aversion to honestly

acknowledge how pervasive it is and how attached we are to its daily benefits. Male privilege routinely means less work maintaining the relationships, infrastructure, logistics, culture, and emotional health of daily life in families, communities, and organizations. It routinely leads to men getting more encouragement and support for their efforts, and more recognition and reward for their contributions.

What male privilege looks like in society is impacted by race, class, ability, and gender history. For example, Black men have historically often been portrayed as sexual predators of white women—a portrayal that has led to brutal justifications of lynching and other forms of violence. Gay men have been harassed and attacked for expressing their gender outside the narrow box of what it means to be a man. Working-class men are often portrayed as mentally and emotionally simple, as easily manipulated work horses who have nothing to contribute to the world but their bodies in war and in the workplace. While there are significant differences of power and history, all men are nonetheless influenced by and privileged by patriarchy. Additionally, all men have opportunities to make significant contributions to ending patriarchal domination in society, our communities, organizations, families, and personal relationships.

I believe that it is possible and necessary to work for a world based on our values and vision, rather than the inherited systems of oppression we oppose. Below is a list of tools and suggestions that have helped me over the years as I have struggled to understand what it means to be a man working for feminism. They are a starting point to help us move forward and create even more expansive tools and strategies. Many of these tools developed as a result of challenging conversations I had with women and gender-oppressed people who encouraged me to do more to practice feminism in my life and in my organizing. Many of these also come out of conversations with other men about ways we could support each other and other men to build up feminist commitment and action.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive or treated like a mechanical checklist. Rather, it is intended as steps towards anti-sexist action. As you practice these tools, make note of the insights you have and the lessons you learn. While I have gathered input from others in making this list, it nonetheless reflects my own experiences.[4] Make changes to this list and

include additional tools that have been helpful to you. Keep that list and share it with other men you are working with. We are in this together, and we need one another.

1. **Develop an intersectional feminist analysis of patriarchy, capitalism, white supremacy, heterosexism, and the state.** Study feminist analysis from writers such as Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, Suzanne Pharr, Angela Davis, Barbara Smith, and Elizabeth 'Betita' Martínez. Learn about the historical development of patriarchy in books such as Maria Mies's *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale,* Silvia Federici's *Caliban and the Witch,* and Andrea Smith's *Conquest.* Explore the impact of patriarchal violence on your life and what you can do to stop it in Paul Kivel's *Men's Work.* Read bell hooks's essays about men and feminism in *Feminism Is for Everybody* and *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love.* Learn more about gender justice in Leslie Feinberg's *Trans Liberation: Beyond Pink or Blue.* Reflect on your experience of gender using Kate Bornstein's *My Gender Workbook* as a guide.
2. **Study social movements and organizing experiences led by women and gender-oppressed people historically and today**—from Ida B. Wells and Abby Kelley to Septima Clark and Ai-Jen Poo. Also learn about men in the movement who supported women's leadership and feminist politics—from William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, and W.E.B. Du Bois to Ricardo Flores Magón, Carl Braden, and David Gilbert. Take stock of the resources around you that can support your learning. Women's Studies, Ethnic Studies, Gender Studies, and Labor Studies programs were won through the struggle of previous generations. Some of the most visionary and powerful feminists of our time teach; seek out opportunities for study at community colleges and other schools. Look into political education and training programs led by Left organizations with feminist politics. Look for events about women's history and feminism at progressive bookstores, social justice conferences, and with community groups. Join or form a study group to read books from some of the authors already mentioned, and to learn more about feminist history.

3. **Think about women, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people in your life who support your development as a feminist.** These may be friends, people you've worked with, or family members. Reflect on what you have learned from them. Far too often patriarchy teaches men to ignore or devalue the wisdom of gender-oppressed people and this both undermines their leadership in society and robs us of their leadership in our lives. Take time to thank people for what you've learned and look for opportunities to support them and strengthen your relationships.
4. **Think about men in your life who can support your process of learning about sexism and developing as a feminist activist.** This could include talking through questions and struggles you are having or reading one of the authors mentioned above together, as well as participating in organizing efforts that have feminist goals. While support for your development as a feminist will often come from women and genderqueer people, and it is important to show gratitude for that support, it is critical to build bonds of mutual support with other men as we work to grow individually and also to develop a culture of feminist activism among men.
5. **Learn about current struggles in your community that further feminist goals and have a gender analysis.** Look for opportunities to get involved and support these efforts. Your support can include donating money, volunteering to do office work, doing outreach for events, showing up with others to demonstrations and rallies, and recruiting other people in your life, particularly men, to get involved as well. It is important to support and respect the existing leadership of these struggles, rather than come in thinking you're going to take over. Look for opportunities to build relationships with the people involved in these efforts. The more you show up and make useful contributions, the more you can also build trust and respect.
6. **Develop a feminist analysis of all the social justice work you do, and work with others to help make that analysis more central in your efforts.** Reach out for help and ask questions. Notice when you feel that asking for help is a sign of weakness and try to do so anyway.

7. **Help create political education opportunities** such as reading groups and workshops for other people to come together and learn more about feminism. Help promote other groups' events on similar themes. Make a special effort to recruit men.
8. **Go deep and go personal.** Day-to-day patterns of domination, both institutional and interpersonal, are the glue that maintains systems of domination. While most of this list is focused on activist efforts, it is also important to bring our politics into our personal relationships. Far too often, activist men support feminism in their public life and retreat into male privilege at home. Going with the flow in personal relationships generally means going with the flow of domination; liberation requires consistent and conscious decisions to choose and create something different. Just like any other effort to win and create another world, set goals in your relationships to practice feminism. It will likely feel awkward, contrived, and uncomfortable at times to bring this level of attention to your personal life. When almost every aspect of society is based on and reinforces male supremacy, it should be expected that our steps towards feminist liberation will at times feel uncomfortable and awkward, and sometimes terrifying. Being clear on our goals, seeking help when we need it, and knowing that we can increase our capacity to live our values through practice, can help us also make feminist action a powerful and rewarding habit.
9. **Become more aware of your own participation in social justice efforts.** For example, count how many times you speak and keep track of how long you speak at meetings and in discussions. Count how many times other people speak and keep track of how long they speak. Be aware of how this breaks down according to gender. Create a method to help you do this for a few months, or until this awareness becomes routine.
10. **Practice noticing who's in the room at meetings and events:** How many cisgender men?[5] How many cisgender women? How many transgender people? How many white people? How many people of color? Is it majority-heterosexual? Are there out queers? What are people's class backgrounds? Don't assume to know people, but also

work at becoming more aware. Listen to people and pick up on how they identify themselves. Talk with people you work with one-on-one and get to know them. Learn about the various ways that people identify and express their gender and explore what it means to be transgender, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming.

11. **Be conscious of how often you are actively listening to and supporting what other people are saying.** As a white guy who talks a lot, I've found it helpful to write down my thoughts and wait to hear what others have to say. Others will frequently be thinking something similar or have better ideas. Practice listening. Support people to develop their ideas. Ask them to expand on what they think about events, ideas, actions, strategy, and vision. Think about who you ask and who you really listen to. Developing respect and solidarity across race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability is complex and difficult, but absolutely critical and liberating. Those most negatively impacted by systems of oppression have played and will play leading roles in the struggle for collective liberation.
12. **Think about whose work and what contributions to the group are recognized and celebrated and whose are not.** Practice recognizing more people for their work and try to do this more often. This also includes men offering support to other men who aren't recognized and actively challenging competitive dynamics that men are socialized to act out with each other. Strive to become fluent in appreciation and gratitude. Capitalist patriarchy thrives on the idea that there is a scarcity of power and that there is only enough for some people at the top to have it. Creating a culture of appreciation and gratitude can help us remember that there is an abundance of power that we can share, and that each of us is capable of making important contributions.
13. **Be aware of how often you ask people to do something as opposed to asking other people, "What needs to be done?"** Male socialized people often assume a higher level of competency than they actually have. Additionally, it is a patriarchal norm to assume men are in charge. There are likely others who are just as qualified, or even more so, who could be in positions of coordination. There are also a lot of

men who are skilled coordinators and this is an important set of skills to pass on to others. Encourage and support others to take on this important leadership role.

14. **Be aware of ways you might think you are always needed, in every discussion, in every work group, to make sure things go right.** Be aware of how this may impact other people's participation. Struggle with the saying, "you will be needed in the movement when you realize that you are not needed in the movement." Humility and encouragement of others, along with appreciation of your own unique gifts and contributions, are key ingredients for successful leadership.
15. **Work with and struggle with the model of group leadership that says that the responsibility of leaders is to help develop more leaders, and think about what this means to you:** How do you support others and what support do you need from others? This includes men providing emotional and political support to other men. Look for opportunities where people can grow as leaders and help others take note of those opportunities. When possible, have group discussions about how to best support various people to make the most of those opportunities. As Ani DiFranco has said, "Every tool is a weapon if you hold it right." Every organizing experience is a leadership development opportunity if you look at it right.
16. **Develop a keen awareness and appreciation for work that is traditionally defined as women's work. Take on this work, and recruit other men to engage in it as well.** Socially defined "women's work" can include cooking, cleaning, providing transportation, replenishing food and supplies, caring for children, tending to people who have special needs (because of illness, age, or ability), taking care of logistics, providing emotional support, mediating conflicts, and other such responsibilities that help build a healthy community. When you engage in this work, learn from the people already doing it, so that you can do it well. Give people appreciation for doing this work and, in the process, grow the understanding of how important this work is to accomplishing overall goals. When this work is shared more equally, it frees up other people's time whose leadership and participation is

needed. Thinking about the needs of others and helping meet those needs is also a concrete way to move out of emotional isolation that many men experience. When recruiting others, take a moment to explain to men why you're asking more men to do this work. See if they have suggestions of men in their lives who would be good to recruit and encourage them to reach out.

17. **Take time to emotionally support other people and deepen your understanding of the political significance of emotional work to building liberatory culture, community, and movement.** People socialized as women often provide the bulk of emotional support in interpersonal relationships, organizations, communities, and movements. While transferring skills and recruiting people to take on responsibilities is important, supporting people to work through internalized oppression, internalized superiority, self-limiting beliefs, and believe in themselves is key to helping people grow as successful activists. Emotional support is also an important part of creating healing and nurturing political culture that helps us sustain our efforts and live our values more fully. In larger society, emotional vulnerability in men is often responded to with ridicule or violence. Providing emotional support and opening yourself to emotional vulnerability are steps towards creating feminist masculinities.

18. **Learn about the impact of sexual violence on the lives of women and gender-oppressed people.** Sexual assault and harassment are prevalent, not only in society, but also in the movement. While we work to make larger-scale changes in society, there are also important roles we can plan in stopping sexual assault and harassment in activist efforts. Learn about ways you can actively challenge rape culture and help build feminist culture. For example, in society at large and in activist settings, women are routinely sexualized and turned into objects of male desire while their leadership, skills, experience, and analysis are marginalized. Remember that women are flirted with, have their bodies commented on, and are hit on over and over again. We need to help make movement spaces, and as many other spaces as possible, safer for women to participate fully rather than spending their time deflecting unwanted advances, comments, and actions. This isn't about creating

an anti-sex culture, but promoting a respectful and consensual one with women's self-determination and autonomy at the center. Men talking openly and honestly with each other and, where appropriate, in group discussions about how to help make this happen is an important step. Men supporting survivors of sexual assault and harassment is an important part of this process. Additionally, it is key that men proactively speak out against rape and rape culture in the company of other men and promote consent culture.

19. **As you work to challenge male supremacy and struggle for feminist change in society, explore your relationship to cisgender men.** Often as men become more conscious of gender and feminism, they work and build community with women and gender-oppressed people. This makes sense, given who is primarily talking about gender and taking action for gender justice and feminism. It also makes sense because many of us have experienced male violence, with our political commitments and identities additionally making us targets. However, it is also important for feminist men to actively build community with other men, both to heal ourselves and organize more men to challenge patriarchy and work for feminist liberation. How can men support and encourage each other in the struggle to develop radical models of anti-racist, class-conscious, pro-queer, feminist manhood that challenges strict binary gender roles and categories? This is not a suggestion to end or stop building relationships with people who aren't men. Rather, we should have a wide range of relationships with people of different genders and maintain a commitment to bringing more men into movement for collective liberation.

20. **Remember that social change is a process, and that our individual transformation and individual liberation are intimately interconnected with social transformation and social liberation.** Life is profoundly complex and there are many contradictions. Mistakes are part of the process. Remember that the path we travel is guided by love, dignity, and respect even when it brings us to tears and is difficult to navigate. Often when men in the movement are asked if they are feminist, their first response is to talk about how frequently they fail to live up to feminist principles. Far too often, men committed to

feminism become incapacitated with shame and act from a place of critique of themselves and others, which prevents us from bringing leadership to help shape events. As we struggle, let us also love ourselves and reach out for help.

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1 There are hundreds of groups and programs around the world led my men doing education and organizing against rape and violence and promoting healthy masculinity influenced by feminism. Here are just a few of the many outstanding examples: Men Can Stop Rape in Washington, D.C. (mencanstoprape.org); Men Stopping Violence in Atlanta, Georgia (menstoppingviolence.org); MensWork: Eliminating Violence Against Women in Louisville, Kentucky (mensworkinc.com); MenEngage, an alliance of groups around the world that seeks to engage boys and men in gender equality (menengage.org); and the Hope Exhibits, a project promoting positive examples of masculinity and gender justice from around the world (hopeexhibits.org).

2 A few notable examples include the Challenging Male Supremacy Project in New York City (zapagringo. blogspot.com/2010/06/challenging-male-supremacy-project), and Paul Kivel's efforts with community groups and schools around the country (paulkivel.com), and Marc Mascarenhas-Swan's trainings with worker cooperatives and activist communities.

3 "Gender-oppressed" refers to people who don't fit into the gender binary of male and female. This includes people who are genderqueer, gender variant, gender non-conforming, intersex, and who either live outside of being male or female or have both male and female genders.

4 Thank you to Justin Stein, Lewis Wallace, Molly McClure, Marc Mascarenhas-Swan, Chanelle Gallant, Josh Connor, Chris Dixon, and RJ Maccani for sharing initial ideas and feedback for this essay. Thank you to Amar Shah, Rachel Luft, Dan Berger, Carla Wallace, RahulaJanowski, Charlie Frederick, Paul Kivel, and Lisa Albrecht for giving feedback.

5 Queer and transgender activists developed the term "cisgender" as a label for individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity. It is a companion term to "transgender."

Section III

"Because Good Ideas Are Not Enough": Lessons for Vision-Based, Strategic, Liberation Organizing Praxis

LOOKING TO THE LIGHT OF FREEDOM

Lessons from the Civil Rights Movement and Thoughts on Anarchist Organizing

When thinking about organizing, about the possibilities for movement building, about the potential of challenging injustice and fundamentally altering the relationships of power in this society, my mind turns to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s. More specifically, my attention focuses in on Ella Baker and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, who initiated some of the most exciting work that I've ever come across. Today, when I read and hear so many debates, dialogues, and discussions about movement building and "Where do we go from here?" I again look to the insights and inspiration of Ms. Baker and SNCC.

The Black liberation struggle and movements for civil rights have shaped the history of the United States. From slave revolts to Ida B. Wells's international anti-lynching campaign, to the fifty thousand women in the National Association of Colored Women at the beginning of the twentieth century, to the struggle today against the prison industrial complex. These legacies of resistance are at the heart of liberation struggles in this country. For white organizers, it is key to study these legacies from the understanding that when people of color oppose racism they are also reaffirming their humanity. In a social order built on white supremacy, people of color organizing for justice and dignity challenges the very foundation of this society. This is why struggles against racism have repeatedly been catalysts for revolutionary social change. The challenge for me is to apply the insights and inspiration from these legacies to the work of the mostly white grassroots activist sectors of the global justice movement.

This essay was written during the heyday of the global justice movement in the early 2000s, when millions were taking to the streets around the world united by shared goals, slogans, and tactics. The Peoples' Global Action network helped coordinate the "movement of movements" as it brought together social movement groups throughout the world, with major leadership coming from the Global South from mass organizations like the Zapatistas in Mexico, the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement, and the Karnataka State Farmers Union (KKRS) from India. In the United States, there was an upsurge of activism and organizing with a strong anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian Left politics from 1999 to 2001. There were hundreds of campaigns on a wide range of issues from environmental to immigrant right and worker rights, along with a growing unity between organizations and struggles around the messages, tactics, and mass actions of the global justice movement. This essay was written during that time to contribute to the vibrant and growing discussions of how to build on the momentum and organize more effectively to further our goals. Anarchists and anarchist politics played major roles in the global justice movement, and this essay is directed primarily at facing challenges within anarchist politics and practice, with the goal of strengthening both, with the hope that we can better fulfill the vision of "another world is possible."

The mass mobilizations and direct action convergences of the global justice movement from 1999 through 2001—including Seattle, DC, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Quebec—have opened up important conversations about strategy, about racism in white progressive movements and the goals of organizing. While these mass actions are connected to a history of resistance over five hundred years old, they have served this generation, particularly white activists, as a catalyst for both organizing and reflection on that organizing. In particular, they have created openings for broader movement debate and dialogue. Writings by radicals of color critiquing the whiteness of these actions and the ways in which racism operates within social change movements have presented clear challenges to white radicals working for social change. These challenges and the issues that they bring up are opportunities for growth and learning that white radicals have a responsibility to take seriously and engage with. The questions, possibilities, and challenges coming out of the mass mobilizations

become concrete when they are connected to the day-to-day work that makes the mass actions possible.

The critique developed by Elizabeth 'Betita' Martínez in her essay "Where Was the Color in Seattle?" needs to be examined for lessons for Food Not Bombs and anti-poverty organizing; Earth First! and environmental actions; union organizing and economic justice; alternative media from micro-powered radio and Independent Media Centers to activist zines everywhere; immigrant-rights and housing work; teaching in public schools and free skools; community gardening and radical art programs; Reclaiming the Streets; dismantling the prison industrial complex and supporting political prisoners, and beyond. Through the critical analysis and lessons developed out of the mass mobilizations, we can find new possibilities and potential for our own local work as white radicals.

The goal of this essay is to look at issues of organizing, power, and leadership in relationship to anarchist practice. Anarchism as a political theory and organizing strategy has been overwhelmingly white and male, and is therefore influenced and shaped by white privilege and male privilege. White privilege is the flipside of racial oppression, as male privilege is the flipside of gender oppression, and each of these must be challenged in the struggle against white supremacy and patriarchy.

This essay argues that anarchists need to follow the advice of Pauline Hwang, an anarchist organizer with Colours of Resistance in Montreal, who writes, "Organize from the bottom up, and follow the lead of women and people of colour who are organizing at the grassroots level." With that in mind, there are three immediate challenges that present themselves to white activists generally and white anarchists in particular: understanding and dismantling privilege and oppression based on race, class, and gender; critically examining our understandings of power; and rethinking our conception of leadership. With those challenges before us, I want to turn to some of the most dynamic organizers of the twentieth century for both insights and inspiration in doing this work.

Ella Baker, Community Organizing, and Participatory Democracy

Ella Baker, who was born in Virginia in 1903, was politicized and radicalized by the poverty of the Great Depression. She participated in self-help

programs throughout the 1930s and developed an understanding and respect for the process by which people take control over their own lives while also protesting injustices.

In the late '30s, Baker became a field organizer for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She traveled throughout the U.S. South and lectured, networked, and organized with any person or group of people she could find. While doings so, she stayed with local NAACP branches, helped organize membership drives, and assisted local groups that were having either internal or external problems. Her overall goal of organizing, however, was to bring the NAACP to the grassroots. As an organizer, Baker believed very strongly in the abilities and the knowledge of local people to address their own issues. She believed that the national organization should serve as a system of support to offer assistance and resources to local campaigns and projects. She believed that organizations needed to serve the grassroots that made the organization strong.

In the early 1940s, she became the assistant field secretary for the NAACP and by 1943 was named the national director of branches. Baker describes her years of organizing with the NAACP and what she tried to accomplish as follows: "My basic sense of it has always been to get people to understand that in the long run, they themselves are the only protection they have against violence and injustice. If they only had ten members in the NAACP at any given point, those ten members could be in touch with twenty-five members in the next little town, with fifty in the next and throughout the state as a result of the organization of state conferences and they, or course, could be linked up with the national. People have to be made to understand that they cannot look for salvation anywhere but themselves."

Baker's organizational style actively worked to keep people informed and empowered, with the goal of people organizing themselves. She argued that strong people do not need a strong leader; rather, they need an organization that can provide mutual aid and solidarity. Those views on organizing were very different from those of the NAACP. In fact, Baker became critical of the national NAACP's failure to support the development of self-sufficient local groups, as it failed to help "local leaders develop their own leadership potential." In response to the unsupportive stance of the NAACP, Baker

began organizing regional gatherings to bring people together and help develop local leadership and organizing skills.

Baker worked to organize and support regional gatherings to both develop people's skills and build communities of support and resistance. This is an example of her commitment to bottom-up organizing that values the work of developing relationships between people and building trust, respect, and power on a grassroots level. She believed in participatory democracy, not just in theory or on paper, but in the messy and complex world of practice where mistakes are made, decision-making is tough, and the process of growth is slow.

In her essay "Ella Baker and the Origins of 'Participatory Democracy,'" Carol Mueller breaks down Ella's conception of participatory democracy into three parts: (1) an appeal for grassroots involvement of people throughout society in the decisions that control their lives; (2) the minimization of hierarchy and the associated emphasis on expertise and professionalism as a basis for leadership; and (3) a call for direct action as an answer to fear, alienation, and intellectual detachment.

The call for direct action was one of Baker's main strategies for creating meaningful social change. She argued that it is the people themselves who create change: that not only does direct action challenge injustice in society, but that ultimately individuals confront the oppression in their own heads and begin the process of self-transformation and self-actualization.

She also believed that as people organize, they will learn from their mistakes and successes and become stronger people in the process: people who believe in themselves and feel a sense of their own power to affect the world around them and make history. If there is a shortage of food due to economic injustice, she would help people to provide food for themselves as well as help organize folks to protest the economic conditions that deny people food. If the school system isn't providing a satisfactory education, then the community must come together to demand changes and to also provide alternatives ways of learning (i.e., after-school programs, study groups, tutoring programs, free schools, homeschooling, etc.). For Baker, direct action was about achieving immediate goals, but it was also deeply connected to developing a sense of power in the people involved. It is this sense of power that would change people far beyond winning the immediate goals and help build a sustainable movement with long-term commitment

and vision. It would also hopefully impact people's perceptions of themselves in relationship to the world and open up greater possibilities for happiness and satisfaction.

Ms. Baker had an innovative understanding of leadership, an idea which she thought of in multiple ways: as facilitator, creating processes and methods for others to express themselves and make decisions; as coordinator, creating events, situations and dynamics that build and strengthen collective efforts; and as teacher/educator, working with others to develop their own sense of power, capacity to organize and analyze, visions of liberation and ability to act in the world for justice. She believed that good leadership created opportunities for others to realize and expand their own talents, skills, and potential to be leaders themselves. This did not mean that she didn't challenge people or struggle with people over political questions and strategies. It meant that she struggled with people over these questions to help develop principled and strategic leadership capable of organizing for social transformation.

She described good leadership as group-centered leadership. Group-centered leadership means that leaders form in groups and are committed to building collective power and struggling for collective goals. This is different than leader-centered groups, in which the group is dedicated to the goals and power of that leader.

Baker's commitment to participatory democracy led her to resign as the national director of branches of the NAACP in 1946. She moved to New York to care for her niece, became the local branch director, and immediately began the process of taking the organization to the grassroots, from out of the offices into the streets.

After the 1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* verdict declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional, Baker and the local branch started campaigning against segregation in the New York school system. Additionally, after the court decision, Baker and several other organizers formed the group In Friendship, which provided financial assistance to local leaders in the South who were suffering reprisals for their organizing. In Friendship believed that the time had come for a mass mobilization against the legally sanctioned racial apartheid of Jim Crow society in the South. When the Montgomery Bus Boycott campaign generated local mass participation, national support and international media, In Friendship

thought they might have found the spark that they were looking for. The group established contact with the Montgomery Improvement Association who was leading the campaign and began taking notes as well as offering support and advice.

Once the campaign came to an end in 1956, with a major victory against segregation on the city buses, In Friendship put forward a proposal to the local leadership of Martin Luther King Jr. and others. Ella Baker, Bayard Rustin, and Stanley Levinson approached Dr. King with the idea of an organizational structure to help network and build a Southern movement against segregation. They believed that Montgomery had shown that "the center of gravity had shifted from the courts to community action" and that now was the time to strike. In 1957, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was founded. SCLC was intended to be a network of local leaders and communities coordinating their actions and providing assistance to one another. It was also formed around the strategy of getting more clergy members to involve themselves and their church communities in the civil rights struggle. SCLC started with sixty-five affiliates throughout the South. The leader of SCLC was Martin Luther King Jr., but Ella Baker opened and ran the group's office in Atlanta, and she used her connections throughout the South to lay the groundwork for the organization. The two principal strategies of SCLC, laid out at the group's founding conference, were building voter power in the Black community and mass direct action against segregation. Baker spent two and a half years as the acting executive director of SCLC, traveling throughout the South to build support for the organization. The first project was the Crusade for Citizenship, which aimed at doubling the number of Black votes in the South within a year. With hardly any resources and little support from the other leaders of SCLC, over thirteen thousand people came together in over twenty-two cities to plan and initiate the campaign.

During her two and half years of organizing with SCLC, her relationship with the leadership began to wane. While Baker continued her work building a bottom-up, grassroots-powered organization, others in SCLC consolidated their adherence to the strategy of the charismatic leader-centered group style that formed around King. She was never officially made the executive director during her tenure as "acting" executive director, which she said happened because she was neither a minister nor a man. The failure

to recognize and respect women's leadership was a major weakness in SCLC and in other formations of the civil rights movement.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Organizing Tradition

In 1960, there was a massive resurgence of civil rights activism and direct action among students who initiated the sit-in movement that swept through the South like wildfire. Thousands of students participated in desegregation actions in which Black and some white students would sit at segregated lunch counters requesting to be served and refusing to leave. The sit-ins were dramatic; they brought the tensions of racial apartheid to the surface and often ended with white violence against the sit-in protesters. The sit-in movement erupted out of previously existing autonomous groups or networks that had been forming. They were largely uncoordinated beyond the local level and there were no visible public leaders; it was a self-organized movement. Within a year and a half, sit-ins had taken place in over one hundred cities in twenty states and involved an estimated seventy thousand demonstrators with three thousand six hundred arrests. Ella Baker immediately realized the potential of this newly developing student movement and went to work organizing a conference to be held in Raleigh, North Carolina, in April of 1960.

The conference brought together student activists and organizers from around the South who had participated in the sit-in movement. Out of 200 delegates, 120 were student activists representing fifty-six colleges and high schools from twelve Southern states and the District of Columbia. As the conference was organized by Baker and she was the acting executive director of SCLC, the leadership of SCLC hoped that the students would become a youth wing of the adult organization. However, Baker, who delivered one of the keynote speeches at the conference, urged the students to remain autonomous, form their own organization, and set their own goals that reflected their militancy and passion for social change.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was born out of the Raleigh conference. SNCC (pronounced "Snick") was run by the students themselves along with two adult advisors: Ella Baker and Howard Zinn. It

would become one of the most important organizations of the '60s, playing a major role in the Freedom Rides, another direct action tactic that dramatically protested segregation. Its organizers started the 'jail no bail" strategy of filling the jails and refusing to pay bail until segregation was ended. SNCC also played a principal role in Freedom Summer in Mississippi, a grassroots community organizing campaign in some of the most formidable areas of the South.

Ella Baker has been referred to as both the midwife who helped deliver SNCC and the founder who helped articulate the base principles from which the group developed. For instance, SNCC was committed to group-centered leadership, to mass direct action, to organizing in the tradition of developing people's capacity to work on their own behalf, and to community building that was participatory and involved local people in decision-making with the goal of developing local leaders. In looking to the lessons of Baker's organizing strategies, it is useful to look at SNCC to see how these concepts were experimented with and applied. From the examples of SNCC, we can draw both insights and inspiration for the work that we are doing today.

As Charles Payne writes in *I've Got the Light of Freedom,*

> SNCC may have the firmest claim to being called the borning organization [as in inspiring and helping shape other organizations]. SNCC initiated the mass-based, disruptive political style we associate with the sixties, and it provided philosophical and organizational models and hands-on training for people who would become leaders in the student power movement, anti-war movement, and the feminist movement. SNCC forced the civil rights movement to enter the most dangerous areas of the South. It pioneered the idea of young people "dropping out" for a year or two to work for social change. It pushed the proposition that merely bettering the living conditions of the oppressed was insufficient; that has to be done in conjunction with giving those people a voice in the decisions that shape their lives. As SNCC learned to see beyond the lunch counter, the increasingly radical philosophies that emerged within the organization directly and indirectly encouraged a generation of scholars and activists to reconsider the ways that social inequality is generated and sustained.[1]

One model of organizing in SNCC was the Freedom School used in Mississippi. The Freedom Schools prioritized political education informed by daily reality to connect day-to-day experiences with an institutional analysis and focused on building leadership and training organizers. SNCC envisioned the schools to operate as "parallel institutions" or what many anarchists refer to today as "counter-institutions." Charlie Cobb, who first proposed the creation of the Freedom Schools, said that the schools were to be "an educational experience for students which will make it possible for them to challenge the myths of our society, to perceive more clearly its realities, and to find alternatives, and ultimately, new directions for action." Curriculum at the schools ranged from "Introducing the Power Structure" to critiques of materialism in "Material Things and Soul Things." There were classes on non-violence and direct action as well as on economics and how the power structure manipulates the fears of poor whites. The lessons learned from the Freedom Schools can help us to envision programs that educate as well as train people to take action.

Ella Baker devoted her time, energy, and wisdom to SNCC that came to embody those principles of participatory democracy and grassroots community organizing that she had helped to develop throughout her lifetime as a radical organizer. Both Baker and SNCC struggled to create collective leadership, to engage in activism that empowered others to become active, to generate change from the bottom up, and to experiment with expanding democratic decision-making into everyday life.

The history and experiences of SNCC offer much to organizers today, in terms of how we go about our work and how we envision our goals. One organizer from SNCC, Bob Zellner, describes the job of an organizer as akin to a juggling act: "Organizers had to be morale boosters, teachers, welfare agents, transportation coordinators, canvassers, public speakers, negotiators, lawyers, all while communicating with people who range from illiterate sharecroppers to well-off professionals and while enduring harassment from agents of the law and listening with one ear for threats of violence. Exciting days and major victories are rare." Ella Baker described community organizing as "spade work," comparing it to the hard of work gardening when you prepare the soil for seeds for the next season. It is backbreaking … and it is what makes it possible for the garden to grow.

Charles Payne advises us repeatedly to look at the everyday work that builds movements and creates social change and to draw lessons from those experiences for our work today. He writes, "Overemphasizing the movement's more dramatic features, we undervalue the patient and sustained effort, the slow, respectful work, that made the dramatic moments possible."

From here, he develops an analysis of how sexism operates in organizing efforts. He explores why the profound impact of women is rarely mentioned in most histories of social movements. Women and young people were the backbone of the struggle in the civil rights movements. On this, Payne writes:

> We know beyond dispute that women were frequently the dominant force in the movement. Their historical invisibility is perhaps the most compelling example of the way our shared images of the movement distort and confuse the historical reality. There is a parallel with the way in which we typically fail to see women's work in other spheres. Arlene Daniels, among others, has noted that what we socially define as "work" are those activities that are public rather than private and those activities for which we get paid. In the same way, the tendency in the popular imagination and in much scholarship has been to reduce the movement to stirring speeches—given by men—and dramatic demonstrations—led by men. The everyday maintenance of the movement, women's work, overwhelmingly, is effectively devalued, sinking beneath the level of our sight.[2]

It is crucial for organizers today to look at our own work and consider what activities we value. How do we treat people who make grand speeches and lead rallies? How do we treat people who make phone calls, facilitate meetings, distribute flyers, raise money, take time out to listen to the troubles of other organizers, coordinate child-care, cook all day, patiently answer dozens of questions from new volunteers or potential supporters, and work hard to make other people in the group or project feel listened to, respected, heard, valued, and supported?

Whose names do we remember and whose work do we praise? As organizers, we do not just put together actions; we help build community and supportive and loving relationships between people, we help sustain and nourish alternative values of cooperation and liberation in this fiercely competitive and individualistic society.

This was the strength of Ella Baker's work, a strength from which we can learn: her attention to group development. Baker stressed the need not only to politicize and mobilize people, but to consciously develop people's capacities to be organizers and leaders in the long haul struggle for a better world. While "each one teach one" strategies and training people in the skills of organizing don't grab headlines in the media, this work builds movement and develops a community of empowerment, solidarity, and support that we need in order to transform society. Her legacy is one that both inspires and informs our day-to-day efforts. The challenge before us is to make sense of this legacy in our work today.

Resisting Privilege, Redefining Power, and Rethinking Leadership

At the beginning of this essay, I mentioned three immediate challenges to white activists generally and white anarchists in particular: understanding and dismantling privilege and oppression based on race, class, and gender; critically examining our understandings of power; and rethinking our conception of leadership. As a white anarchist, I want to embrace the complexity of these issues. I want to acknowledge that there are no clear answers, but rather good questions that can challenge us to go further, and to break out of what is comfortable and static to new possibilities.

First, the challenge of understanding and dismantling privilege and oppression based on race, class, and gender: it is important to stay focused on the goal of our personal reflections. To do so is not about guilt or about confessing to one's sins. Rather, it is about placing oneself in the matrix of domination that shapes our society and recognizing how the complex nature of your location influences you and how you can take part in dismantling the structures of domination altogether. It is also important to recognize how one's place in society shifts and takes on new meaning in different situations, which pushes us to be more and more aware of these dynamics.

For example, white privilege impacts the ways that white radicals conceive of politics and organizing. I've been socialized most of my life to speak my mind, to take my opinions and thoughts seriously. Teachers, parents, and other adults have looked at kids like me as the "future of this country." Pictures of people who look like me (white, male, and assuredly heterosexual) fill the history books and are celebrated as the smartest and brightest who have ever lived. Much of my initial politics was based on rejecting this middle-class culture, rejecting the role of being among the "future leaders of this great country." I had the material privilege to do this comfortably, in terms of money and my parents' house. I say all of this not out of guilt but in order to place myself in both history and society. By doing so, I can analyze how my privilege, my location in the matrix, impacts my view of the world, my understanding of myself, and my ideas of organizing, resistance, and liberation.

As a younger organizer, my anarchist politics were firmly rooted in a politics of rejection, in a refusal to participate in a society based on exploitation, oppression, and massive destruction of the environment, animals, and people. My politics were summed up by saying "Fuck all authority." While anarchism is a complex body of theory and practice, this anti-power, rejection-based politic has been one of its strong undercurrents; it was certainly one in my thinking. Much of anarchist thought on issues of power, leadership, and organization has been informed by brilliant critiques of power and white privilege. One of the most important contributions of anarchist politics has been the analysis of power inequalities and the visions of egalitarian social relationships. One of its biggest shortcomings has been grappling with the question of how we get from here to there, and white privilege has been one of the major barriers for anarchists struggling with this question.

The understanding of both power and leadership held by most anarchists has maintained inequalities both within anarchist circles and in our relationships with others. In our rejection of both power and leadership, we frequently work in or create organizations that are breeding grounds for informal hierarchies often defined by race, class, and gender. We have frequently gone so far as to argue for a complete rejection of organization altogether, advocating for spontaneous revolt, which again breeds informal hierarchies with no means of challenging this behavior. Given this situation,

anarchism is one of the most white, often male-dominated political movements in the United States today. Admitting the realities of white supremacy, patriarchy, and heterosexism, I am not trying to isolate the anarchist movement but rather to argue that we need to examine where we are if we are to seriously think about where we want to go. As a movement, we also need to look to the writings and organizing of anarchists of color, and women and queer anarchists for thoughts and leadership about direction and visions of the future.

One of the most significant aspects of anarchism is the argument that the ends do not justify the means of organizing. This has generally been thought of in terms of the tactics and organizational structure one uses. While there is a strong tendency in anarchism to lay out a very simplistic, dualistic framework of good/bad and right/wrong to think about these issues, there is also a large body of theory and practice coming overwhelmingly from anarchists and anti-authoritarians who are women, people of color, and/or queer that focuses on the multiple roles of the state, the ways that power operates, processes for empowerment and self-determination, what group development and collective action can look like, and how all of this can help us organize in more dynamic and visionary ways. This is not to say that everything said by a radical person of color or a white queer person is brilliant, useful, or right, or that nothing said by a white, hetero male is of value. Rather the voices marginalized in larger society are also often marginalized in radical movements and anarchists who champion egalitarianism have a responsibility address this. Marginalized voices are often the most radical and realistic about social change.

Defining anarchism as in opposition to not only capitalism and the state but also to white supremacy, patriarchy, and heterosexism is a move in this direction. The next step would be to figure out exactly what this shift means for the ways that we view and act in the world.

How anarchists talk about power is a big issue. For example, the anarchist punk band Crass put forward a highly popular slogan: "Destroy Power, Not People." The Black Panther Party put forward a similarly widely used slogan: "All Power to the People." It is not inconsequential that the band Crass was all white people. While both of these slogans utilize the word "Power," do they use the word to mean the same thing? Crass refers to

oppressive power: the power of the state to go to war, the power of capitalism to devastate the planet and exploit people. The Black Panther Party means power in terms of self-determination. The first demand of the Black Panthers ten-point platform was, "1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black community. We believe that Black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny." The Black Panthers, Ella Baker, SNCC, and many, many others (including many anarchists) have argued that people are the source of power and that we must organize to build collective power to dismantle oppressive power. It is also useful to distinguish between power over others and power with others in this way.

While this may sound like a debate over semantics, it is actually a debate about the ways that anarchists think about the world and act in it. It is also about the ways that white privilege and male privilege have influenced anarchist politics—the focus, for example, on anti-power rather than building power. This goes deep. There are white anarchist men, for example, who say that there are no "power dynamics" in their organizations because no one has or wants power. Worse still, there are white anarchist men who say that there are no power dynamics because they don't believe in organization anyway and everyone should just "act." These ideas must be challenged, as they fail to see the complex reality of race, class, and gender, or how power and privilege operate on multiple levels. This must be challenged because while white anarchist men might reject power and denounce privilege in theory, we all still live in a society that grants and denies power and privilege on the basis of race, class, and gender. This is why white male anarchists repeatedly say things like, "if women aren't being heard, they should just speak up," or "I'm not the leader, I'm just always doing everything because no one else knows how" (I can't even begin to count how many times I've said something like this over the years).

Helen Luu, an anti-authoritarian immigrant organizer with Colours of Resistance, who comes from a poor background, frames the issue of white privilege this way:

> Genuine anti-racist work involves building alliances and working in solidarity with people of colour; it means understanding the ways that unequal power relations manifests itself in all settings (including

> activist ones) and how it works to oppress some while privileging others; it means looking to people of colour as leaders, and not as mere tokens in order to prove how "anti-racist" your group is ("We're not racist! Look, we have two Asians in our group!"). It means a whole lot more too, but above all, it means being dedicated to proactively and consciously working to bring down the structure of white supremacy and privilege.[3]

Towards a Theory and Practice of Anti-Authoritarian Leadership

In her groundbreaking book *Black Feminist Thought,* Patricia Hill Collins writes, "Black women have not conceptualized our quest for empowerment as one of replacing elite white male authorities with ourselves as benevolent Black female ones. Instead, African American women have overtly rejected theories of power based on domination in order to embrace an alternative vision of power based on a humanist vision of self-actualization, self-definition, and self-determination." This understanding of power, in conjunction with a critical analysis of how oppressive power operates is a solid foundation for our work.

Organizing is about building collective power. The process of building collective power is also about developing the power that each of us has to act and engage with the world. The ways that anarchists conceptualize issues of power and politics play out in the ways that we conceptualize organizing.

Ella Baker talked about and worked from a model of group leadership, of developing the capacities of each person to be a leader to participate in the shaping and making of decisions. She also paid great attention to developing the capacities of people to be organizers, to create a movement based on participation and empowerment. Traditionally, the idea of leadership is based on one person making all of the decisions in an authoritarian manner: a model in which people follow others, often blindly. Anarchists have been rightfully critical of this model, but our thinking needs to be even more complex. Baker and SNCC, among others, present an approach to organizing that concretely struggles with the question of getting from here to there.

Baker's model of organizing and leadership is firmly rooted in a politics of empowerment. She believed that a movement fighting for social

transformation must also be transforming the individuals involved. She believed that people grew and developed through collective work to challenge oppression. She wasn't just talking about the ways that people see the world but also the place they see themselves in the world, from being acted upon by forces of oppression to acting in the world for social justice. This shift involves learning politics and skills, but also a sense of self and being prepared to act. A leader or organizer in the spirit of Ella Baker is one who actively encourages other people's participation, who works with others to develop skills, confidence, analysis, and ability to take action for the long haul. Leadership in the spirit of Baker and SNCC means not prioritizing the ends over the means, because the means lead you to the ends. While they were not anarchists, the theory and practice they developed for egalitarian organizing was far more sophisticated than that of most anarchists.

The challenge for a mostly white movement lays not only in how to bring people together to fight against oppression but also to dismantle their privileges. This is a major reason for developing a powerful and complex understanding of organizing and leadership. How do we support and encourage self-organization while committed to dismantling white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism, capitalism, and the state? As a mostly white movement, we speak to mostly white people; historically, when white people have spontaneously demonstrated their rage, it has usually been directed at communities of color (from lynchings and to rape and burning down whole towns to voting overwhelmingly against immigrant rights and affirmative action). White radicals have a responsibility to play leadership roles in challenging white supremacy in white society.

A theory and practice of anti-authoritarian leadership are full of contradictions, tensions, questions, discomforts, confusion, and uncertainties … and that's what I like about it. Being honest about contradictions opens up possibilities for understanding in a way that denial does not. Furthermore, tensions—that which exists between binary/dualistic frameworks, in the gray areas, in the both/and rather than either/or—can be a creative force to develop something new, something uncharted while strict guidelines that contain and restrict. What exists between the concepts of leader and follower? What does it mean to be simultaneously a follower, a leader, an individual, a participant in a collective process, someone who is privileged on the basis of race but oppressed on the basis of

gender, someone who has experience and wisdom to share with the group and wants to encourage broad participation in discussions, someone who knows that one can be at once oppositional to and complicit with oppression? When all of these different positions and ideas are recognized rather than denied, then something more creative and dynamic can develop. I am not wedded to the word "leadership"; I am interested in struggling with the tools and concepts of leadership in relationship to being an anarchist. Anarchists need more tools, more concepts to use in our day-to-day work. In looking for insights and inspiration on organizing that prioritize egalitarian practices, I have looked to liberation struggles from communities of color. Many of these struggles are led by women of color, who are producing many of the most radical and hopeful strategies for social transformation out there.

With that in mind, we should heed the advice of working-class queer anarchist organizer gabriel sayegh, who writes:

> We [white activists] must become active, effective listeners if we are serious about being part of a movement. We must be willing to challenge our selves—our behaviors, actions, and thinking—as much as we are willing to challenge the global institutions of capitalism. This is a difficult task indeed. We can find direction by examining what radical people of color have been doing for centuries-organizing a movement for liberation.[4]

We must be willing to struggle over these complex and difficult questions of theory and practice, but we must do so as we engage in our day-to-day work to transform ourselves in the process of transforming this society. Facing the complexity of reality is one of the most radical actions we can take.

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1 Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 100,

2 Ibid., 276.

3 From "Discovering a Different Space of Resistance: Personal Reflections on Anti-Racist Organizing" by Helen Luu, published online in the winter of 2001. http://www.coloursofresistance.org/392/discovering-a-different-space-of-resistance-personal-reflections-on-anti-racist-organizing/.

4 From "Redefining Success: White Contradictions in the Anti-Globalization Movement" by gabriel sayegh, written in the fall of 2000, http://www.coloursofresistance.org/298/redefining-success-

white-contradictions-in-the-anti-globalization-movement/.

“BUT WE DON’T HAVE LEADERS”

Leadership Development and Anarchist Organizing

Leadership and leadership development can play important roles in moving forward our commitment to equality in organizations, movements, and society. Leadership development, as defined by Jewish organizer Dara Silverman, is working with others to build skills, analysis, and confidence. Anti-authoritarian organizing, as it relates to this essay, is building the capacity of people and their organizations to challenge illegitimate authority—which includes capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism, and the state. Anti-authoritarian organizing, like other forms of radical organizing, uses principles of solidarity, cooperation, and participatory democracy to build movements for social change. Over the past century, this kind of organizing has helped advance a politics that challenges the idea that the ends justify the means. The emphasis on empowerment, democratic participation, and transparent decision-making are based in the strategy that our organizing prefigures the society we’re working to build. The goal of this essay is to help us as anti-authoritarian Left organizers move beyond the belief that we have “leaderless movements” towards an analysis and practice of developing “leaderful movements” in which millions of everyday people are bringing their leadership to building democratic movements and creating democratic organizations, institutions, communities, and cultures that can win and create systemic liberatory change.

The concept of leadership is complicated and the struggle for a more complex understanding of leadership is ongoing. Movement veteran Elizabeth ‘Betita’ Martínez says:

> As organizers, we need to reject the definition of leadership as domination, but without denying the existence and need for leadership. Denial can lead to a failure to demand accountability from our leaders. That demand must be embraced, along with anti-authoritarian methods, in leadership development. Accountability takes the measure of a person's responsibility; it means being accountable to one's fellow organizers, to the goals of one's collectivity and ultimately to the people one claims to serve.[1]

In thinking about leadership development, I have been guided by the following questions: How can leadership development help us build mass-based, multiracial, anti-racist, feminist, anti-capitalist movements with visible leadership from women, queer and transgendered people, and working-class people of all colors? How can we talk about leadership without creating the image of two or three people leading us, but the millions of people, in their communities, who are right now leading progressive social change around the world? As a white man from a middle-class background, I grapple with what an anti-racist, feminist, class-conscious leadership development process look like for people of a similar background who are working for collective liberation. In writing this essay, I think of those who have supported me in thinking about leadership development and the lessons they have taught me through their own practice: people like Ingrid Chapman, David Rojas, Molly McClure, Sharon Martinas, Clare Bayard, Maria Poblet, Marc Mascarenhas-Swan, and Elizabeth 'Betita' Martínez.

In arguing against the commonly held opinion that revolution was both spontaneous and right around the corner, nineteenth-century Italian revolutionary Errico Malatesta said, "It must be admitted that we anarchists, in outlining what we would like the future society to be, have, in general, made everything look a bit too easy." We have a critique of existing society and a vision for the future, but no plan to move forward, he said. He went on to say that we must meet people where they are, win concrete improvements in people's lives through collective action and, together, expand both our desire and capacity for liberation. Leadership development is about expanding that capacity and recognizing that social change doesn't just

happen, it is made. It's about the long, slow, patient process of building power with people rather than power over people.

Food Not Bombs and the Struggle over Leadership

In the winter of 1994, San Francisco Food Not Bombs (FNB) activists were facing repeated arrests for sharing free food at the Civic Center across from city hall. Keith McHenry, a longtime FNB organizer was going to court, facing felonies, and over a hundred people protested at the Hall of Justice to drop all charges and end police harassment of low/no-income people. I had just moved to San Francisco and wanted to get involved. I had been involved with FNB in Whittier, a suburb of Los Angeles, but I didn't know any of the SF FNB people. The long line of police in riot gear at the protest was intimidating. I tried to introduce myself to some folks, but people were caught up in the moment. I stood by myself trying to figure out what was going on, wearing my FNB button, hoping someone would talk to me.

Someone did talk to me—Keith McHenry. He was thanking people for coming out and introducing himself to people. When I said I had been doing FNB for the past two years, he immediately started introducing me to other FNBers and invited me back to his house for dinner. He asked me question after question about how I got involved and what we did in Whittier. He gave me literature, told me about the meetings, and asked me what I was interested in doing. He told great stories and had a healthy laugh. Over the next year, he would call me regularly and ask if I could help him with all kinds of projects.

Keith did an excellent job of bringing me in and supporting me to thrive as a new member. I wanted to join, and he opened the door and welcomed me into the group. He didn't just tell me what needed to be done, he asked me questions and wanted to know what I was all about. He asked me what I was interested in and followed up with me. He mentored me in direct action organizing while consistently encouraging me to bring up my own ideas, and I was heavily involved in FNB for the next six years.

Keith is a good organizer, but dynamics around privilege were also at play here. Keith is a white man from a working-class background who in connecting with me connected with a younger white man from a middle-class background. Our connecting and working together wasn't problematic

in and of itself, but it was part of a pattern of white men bonding with another and the impact it had on who had power in the group. The problem was the ways that white men—working-class and middle-class—dominated the leadership positions in FNB, and how our ostensible rejection of having leaders prevented meaningful discussion about sharing power, challenging privilege, and supporting leadership development of a broader base of people, in particular those who are often marginalized from leadership roles. For example, it was not uncommon between 1995 and 1998 to have organizing committees of five men and one woman, all white and of mixed-class backgrounds. While the majority of those who attended general meetings were men, women made up at least half of those who did the day-to-day work. By rejecting leadership, we were also rejecting processes by which we could appreciate leadership skills, like those that Keith had, and train a wider range of people to have them as well.

In FNB, the concept of leadership was fiercely debated. For years, many of us said, "There are no leaders." Often people like myself who were playing obvious leadership roles were the ones most vehement about the group "not having leaders." Our refusal of leadership was, in many ways, an attempt to share power, but it also made it extremely difficult to talk about the real power dynamics in our work and how they related to institutional forms of privilege and oppression. If we have no leaders, it was argued, then anyone can participate just as much as anyone else. If we believe in power-sharing and collective organizing, then work in the group is generated by personal initiative driven by a neutral "do it yourself" ethic. Power dynamics in the group were frequently discussed as personality conflicts and attributed to the shortcomings of individuals. As Malatesta warned, we had a critique of inequality and a vision of equality, but no plan to get from here to there.

When we talked about why the same people did all the work, we rarely put forward concrete steps about how to change the situation. There was often anger from all sides about the situation: those doing the majority of the work would say they needed help and ask why people weren't participating; those making many of the decisions would often say they wanted more people to be involved, that they didn't want to have all this power. The latter often felt guilty and defensive about the situation. Those who were marginalized in the group talked about how others were monopolizing power and that things needed to change. Inequalities and

their negative consequences continued to hurt individuals and undermine the group's efforts.

For twenty-three years, FNB groups have been an important point of entry for thousands of people coming into movements for liberation around the world.[2] FNB—like other groups that are gateways into social change work such as MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán), Gay-Straight Alliances, anti-corporate student groups, Earth First! and others—create opportunities for people to learn, practice, and develop skills, analysis, and confidence. While working for a just society, these groups can also help people understand the connection between personal and social transformation.

Leadership development is primarily about doing day-to-day work—door-knocking, political education, recruitment, cooking for a hundred people at a rally—and having a space to reflect and learn from the experience. For me, making leadership development a more formal and intentional process has been about taking responsibility for my actions and trying to be accountable to the people with whom I work. In rejecting leadership, I was in many ways rejecting responsibility and accountability to others and continuing the tradition of capitalist individualism. In learning to respect the leadership of others and in myself, I have struggled to reclaim trust in and respect for myself, both of which I was taught to achieve only through dominating others. In working to heal myself and fight back, I have needed the leadership of others who have nurtured and developed communities of resistance and cultures of liberation.

Developing Leadership and Building Organization

In FNB, the most successful change happened through identifying positions of leadership in the group and open discussions about power and strategies of how to share it. This was an ideological shift from "no leaders" to "working to all be leaders." We already had rotating facilitators at our weekly meetings and someone who served as the treasurer. People began to identify other responsibilities in the group: writing up literature, developing and sending press releases, representing the group in coalitions, and so on. We had begun to identify leadership, but we did not yet have a leadership

development process, and so the same people generally stayed doing the work they were doing.

An important piece of leadership development is recognizing the skills and analysis people already have and providing each other encouragement and opportunities to develop further. It's helpful to look at the many ways that leadership manifests—strategic, tactical, theoretical, programmatic, or operational, to name a few—and then break those down into tasks and concrete steps people can take. We become more confident in our abilities through practice and accomplishing concrete projects.

One step is to identify the many things that need to get done in an organization and have coordinators delegate the work. There should be things new people as well as people who have been around can take on. This doesn't mean just announcing tasks at a meeting, but asking people to do certain things. Something like facilitating a meeting for the first time, speaking to the media, performing before a large number of people, or confronting the mayor requires giving people extra encouragement and support. Asking people about their experiences and opening up space for evaluating past experiences is a big part of leadership development.

In my experience, asking someone directly to do something is far more effective than asking for volunteers in a meeting in terms of building the collective power of the organization as well as promoting the leadership of a broader base of people. I volunteered for so many things in FNB meetings, wishing other people would do the same, resenting other people for not stepping up, and knowing that people resented me for my position. Anti-authoritarian leadership development is about looking at our organizations, looking at how power operates, and taking small but concrete steps to share power.

When people take on work, they should be acknowledged for doing so, and not just for embodying highly visible roles or for doing the speaking and writing. This is crucial for movement building. Leadership development treats different levels of responsibility as stepping stones to help people get concrete things done, to build their involvement, to increase their sense of capacity, and to develop the skills necessary for the job. Leadership development is far more than just rotating work; it is based on the belief that analysis, strategic planning, and critical consciousness develop through action and reflection. Without space for reflection—"What did you learn

from that experience?" "What was good and what could have been better about that protest?" "What could you have done differently?"—our abilities to plan and organize can stagnate. Without this space in FNB, for example, we were generally more reactive than proactive, and long-term planning meant thinking two months down the line. In rejecting leadership, we also undermined our ability to plan and be strategic.

Leadership development is also about encouragement, recognizing that people frequently carry enormous insecurities about being good enough, having enough experience, having anything worthwhile to say, and doubting that anyone thinks they're capable enough. Simply saying,"Hey, you should go to the next organizing meeting" can be a form of leadership development. It's a reminder that the meeting is happening and indicates that you want that person's involvement. Asking someone face-to-face is the best way to get them to go somewhere or do something, because you can provide encouragement if they say, "No, I don't have enough experience" or "But I haven't been in the group long enough." Working through our own and others' insecurities and fears is a huge part of organizing.

San Francisco FNB's largest event, our twentieth anniversary free festival Soupstock that turned out over fifteen thousand people, was a majority-women organizing crew that coordinated over three hundred volunteers. The first majority-women meetings were the result of intentional outreach and recruitment to experienced and skilled women who likely would not have volunteered on their own, and furthermore would have been alienated being in majority-male meeting spaces based on their past experiences. The recruitment included answering questions about involvement, trying to get folks excited about the project, and most importantly, responding to comments like, "There are others who would be better at this than me," or "I'm not an organizer," with detailed lists of why they, specifically, would be great in this role, followed by encouragement. But it wasn't just that suddenly more women were asked to participate and there was feminist transformation. Rather, it was the result of a decade of work by women, many of whom were working-class, like Johnna Bossuot, Alice Nuccio, Julia Golden, Tai Miller, Lynn Harrington, Catherine Marsh, Rahula Janowski, loretta carbone, Genevieve McGowan, Yael Grauer, Camisha Ann Reidt, Lauren Rosa, Catrina Roallos, and Clare Bayard, who organized Women's Autonomous Cookhouses, distributed feminist literature, put on anti-sexism

workshops, and initiated a women's discussion group to support each other's leadership. In SF FNB, becoming more conscious of whose leadership was supported and how it was supported, and how race, class, and gender privileges operate, helped lay the foundation for change.

A consciously radical leadership development process needs to have a strong antioppression analysis of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and age. Who already feels entitled to volunteer for responsibilities? Who already has certain skills and resources? Whose participation goes unrecognized? I've been in countless FNB meetings in which mostly white men would come for the first time and talk like they knew it all and volunteer for high levels of responsibility that many other people who had been in the group for years had never taken on. I've also talked with dozens of people who were in groups for long periods of time and said they didn't take on responsibility because "other people would be able to do a better job" or "I didn't think other people would think I was capable enough."

An anti-oppression analysis is key to leadership development. The majority of leadership in liberation struggles comes from people of color, working-class and low-income people, Jewish people, transgender people, queers, and women. For me, leadership development has been working to challenge the ways that race, class, and gender privilege have been obstacles to seeing and learning from this leadership in oppressed communities. A leadership development process for people with race, class, and gender privilege that has a focus on learning from leadership in oppressed communities is critical to successful movement building.

Looking to leadership in oppressed communities is recognizing that those most negatively impacted by oppression hold keys to dismantling those systems. It has meant looking for that leadership and listening harder, knowing my socialization trains me to ignore those voices. It's not about agreeing uncritically with everything but about engaging respectfully because leadership from oppressed communities has been the heart of liberation struggle and is key to my own liberation. It's also about understanding complexity, knowing that there's a vast diversity of voices in oppressed communities, knowing that looking to leadership is about liberation struggle not guilt, and acknowledging that I must make political choices and be accountable for those choices. Systemic inequality and injustice are built on the backs of oppressed communities and radical

leadership from those communities is core to the radical struggle to free us all. My training as a white, middle-class, mostly heterosexual male was to only see people who looked like me as leaders. When I rejected the idea of leaders, I was revolting against that training. Later, however, it became clear that leadership from oppressed peoples was key to my own struggle against internalized white supremacy, patriarchy, heterosexism, and capitalism. In universalizing my understanding of leadership as loyalty to oppression, I was marginalizing leadership for liberation both in oppressed communities and in myself. Anti-authoritarian leadership development grounded in antioppression politics is about critically looking at how power, privilege, and oppression operate and taking concrete steps to build our movements and move us towards collective liberation.

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1 From a conversation with Elizabeth 'Betita' Martínez in preparation for writing this essay.

2 Food Not Bombs was twenty-three years old when this essay was written in 2003. Food Not Bombs, founded in 1980, continues to exist, with hundreds of chapters around the world, and it continues to be an important point of entry for thousands of people.

Section IV

"Love in Our Hearts and Eyes on the Prize": Lessons from Anti-Racist Organizing for Collective Liberation

WHAT WE MEAN BY WHITE ANTI-RACIST ORGANIZING

Catalyst Project's Strategy

While there are many different ways to engage in anti-racist work, this essay, along with other organizational interviews in this section of the book, explores anti-racist organizing in white communities. We need a wide variety of strategies to be effective. My focus is not an argument that this is the right way or the best way, rather that this work is a critically important component of our overall efforts to create systemic change for collective liberation. This essay looks at the strategy of Catalyst Project, where I was an organizer from 2000 to 2011.[1]

Catalyst Project was formed during the height of the global justice movement to help make the most of the opportunities around us. In order to build the power of the movement, we believed we needed to simultaneously nurture its strengths and take on some of its key weaknesses. During that time in the early 2000s and since, Catalyst has engaged in anti-racist political education, leadership development, organization building, and organizing, with a focus on white communities. Through our experience, we strongly believe that moments when people are in motion for justice create enormous openings for transformative organizing, and this includes anti-racist work in white communities. These moments will always be complicated, challenging, rife with racism/white privilege, and also full of opportunity to advance our overall goals of bringing millions of white people to a collective liberation vision, culture, strategy, and practice.

Catalyst works to answer the challenge from organizers of color who, generation after generation, call on white people who are committed to social justice to work with each other and within white communities to uproot racism as part of a larger strategy to build powerful movements for

broad systemic change. We believe that the only way to move this country towards equity, justice, health, and cooperative systems is for us to dismantle the systems of divide-and-control that keep the 1 percent calling all the shots. Central to this effort is the abolition of white supremacy.

Anti-Racist Organizing

Over years of working in white communities, Catalyst uses the shorthand "white anti-racist organizing" to describe our work. What do we mean by that? When we say "white," we mean the historical and institutional development of white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy in the creation of the United States, conditions which result in my now being a white person. The United States was created by the wealthy class to maximize private power and wealth through exploitation of the vast majority's labor and oppression of the vast majority's humanity. Wealth and power have been and are taken from the majority through slavery, genocide, colonization, indentured servitude, low-paying/high-profit-making jobs, and unpaid reproductive labor in the home and community.

Racism enables economic exploitation that drives down wages and drives up the cost of living, healthcare, education, and the basic needs that more and more people are unable to meet. Racism erodes safety and health for the people of color it targets, and then works on the rest of us. Racism causes environmental crises that impact communities of color first and worst, and are changing life as we know it for all of us.

But wherever there is exploitation and oppression, there is resistance. Alongside the history of oppression, there is a vast history of resistance and liberation struggle. Slave masters in the South faced widespread individual and collective resistance from enslaved Africans, and at times joint struggle between enslaved Africans and Native American nations as well as with indentured Europeans. Such uprisings of slaves and servants haunted the master class, which in response outlawed marriages between Africans and Europeans and outlawed gatherings of Africans and Europeans. They passed these laws because people were forming family and building community—not in large numbers, but in significant enough numbers to strike fear into the ruling class. They understood that bonds of love, family, and community

across groups of exploited and oppressed peoples—the vast majority of the population—could be a foundation for joint resistance against the minority at the top accumulating and maintaining wealth and power.

Ruling classes, through hundreds of years of experience, developed sophisticated methods of dividing and controlling people to take land, enslave people, and create a politically docile and economically exploited class of citizens. In the United States, this method was white supremacy. In order to prevent a foundation of joint resistance from forming, a racial order needed to be constructed to divide people. While the vast majority of people were exploited to create profit, citizenship with limited (but significant) political rights became a category in society for "white" people. While these political rights were originally for land-owning European males, this expanded to include all Europeans with European women primarily having access to these rights through relationships to men.

The expansion of these rights came primarily as a result of the ruling class responding to resistance from oppressed peoples. For example, with massive resistance from formerly enslaved Black people in the late 1800s, alongside a growing radical working-class movement with millions of newly immigrated, not-yet-white Europeans participating, the ruling class responded with a classic divide-and-control tactic: Americanization (white citizenship) process for Italians, Jews, Irish, Germans, Poles, Russians, and other European ethnic groups, and Jim Crow apartheid for Blacks.

White Privilege

White privilege is the flipside of racial oppression. As a white person in this country, I have an economic, political, cultural, and psychological relationship of privilege to institutional power. Race is not a biological reality, but rather a position within a hierarchy of power based in one's relationship to the state. The United States was created as a white nation, for white citizens. The devastation of New Orleans because of defunded levees during Hurricane Katrina, along with the federal government's failure to respond, and the current criminalization of immigrants of color from Arizona to Alabama are two highprofile examples of this enduring reality.

"White" is not a category of who I am as an individual person. Rather, it is a historically developed social position into which I was born in this country. My relationship to the state and the economy shapes what I have access to, how society interacts with me, and how I understand myself in relationship to others. This is not just a relationship between myself as an individual white person and the state and economy. It is the accumulated experience of hundreds of years of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. In short, white supremacy is internalized within me and has profound impacts on how I relate to the world around me. This internalized white supremacy is based on the material reality of political, economic, and social privilege that I and other white people experience every day as white citizens of this nation.

It is important to make a distinction here between privilege and power. Most white people in the United States experience economic, political, and/or cultural oppression based on class, gender, sexuality, and ability, as well as race-based privilege. Privilege generally refers to rights, norms, standards, and attitudes that should apply to everyone, but that many people are denied. For example, for most of the history of the United States, people of color were denied access to most jobs, legal protections, social services, civic participation, and neighborhoods (except to work in them). Additionally, violence against people of color has been socially and in many cases de facto legally sanctioned.

Another example deeply impacting the current economic system is the ability to accumulate wealth through inheritance, or debt and poverty through inheritance. For most communities of color, there is a long history of land, labor, and lives of family members stolen through slavery, colonization, and genocide. Hundreds of years of slavery generated enormous wealth for the plantation master class in the South and the industrial capitalist class in the North, while Black communities inherited poverty, enforced illiteracy, trauma of families brutally pulled apart, and so on. In short, while many white people have and do experience profound economic hardships, the economic hardships of communities of color have been and are far more devastating, brutal, and enduring as that hardship is part of an overall white supremacist capitalism that daily denies the full humanity of people of color.

Social Relationship of Power

So, when we say "white," we are primarily talking about a social relationship of power to the state and in the economy that shapes the culture of society. This relationship has been created to privilege white people, oppress people of color, and accumulate the majority of institutional wealth and power to the ruling class.

By "anti-racist," we mean engaging with white people to develop anti-racist politics, commitment, and practice as well as developing and strengthening powerful multiracial alliances and collaboration. We do this by taking action on issues impacting white communities, such as economic and environmental injustice, in ways that foreground white supremacy in the problem, and anti-racist/multiracial movement building in the solution, and by joining with or supporting similar struggles in communities of color. We also do this by joining organizing in communities of color and developing a strategy with organizers and leaders of color for bringing white people into such struggles in large numbers.

In almost all racial justice struggles, there are small numbers (from dozens to thousands) of white people involved in many ways—from leaders, organizers, educators, participants in events/demonstrations, volunteers, donors, supporters, and more. While we work to develop skilled, visionary organizers and leaders to increase the effectiveness and size of this small number, we also look for ways to bring in tens and hundreds of thousands of white people to participate in meaningful ways to end white supremacy, and advance collective liberation in ways that have both immediate positive impacts and long-term transformative impacts.

We also want to build up and expand liberation culture and practice that supports white people to bring these values and commitments into how they are building community, family and raising children, and how they can bring leadership in their places of worship, schools, community activities, workplaces, neighborhoods, and networks. We want to develop effective anti-racist leadership to help further profound solutions based in economic, racial, gender, social, and environmental justice to the problems our communities face.

Revolutionary Politics

Talking about white privilege, white supremacy, and anti-racism needs to be connected to a larger revolutionary politics of ending all systems of oppression and creating systems of liberation. This means not only challenging white supremacy in the United States but also challenging the role the United States has played in the world. We must understand the centrality of white supremacy in the relationship between the U.S. ruling class and the Global South, and in the relationship between the U.S. ruling class and communities of color in this country. This understanding helps unite anti-racist work in white communities in the United States to the visions, strategies, and experiences of powerful people's movements around the world. This unity opens deeper possibilities for learning, solidarity, and collaboration.

Revolutionary politics means collective liberation, or a politics committed to the goal of liberation for all people from all forms of oppression. We see the goal of collective liberation as a long-term political commitment that guides our work, shapes our strategies, and helps us think creatively about our vision. This commitment to collective liberation takes shape as: 1) recognizing the exploitation and oppression in society; 2) understanding one's relationship to that exploitation and oppression; and 3) working to form alliances between people who experience both oppression and privilege to transform this society, recognizing the centrality of oppressed people's leadership in that process.

We think of collective liberation as a vision to work towards and as a strategic orientation to help us think about the work we do. We also look at white privilege as a way to unlock the white supremacist worldview that turns white people into individuals solely responsible for pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. As a white person, I see how white privilege distorts my relationship to history and my position in society. This individualism and distorted worldview are barriers to collective organizing; they negatively impact the relationship of white people to other people in general, and to oppressed peoples in the United States and around the world in particular.

White privilege undermines our ability as white people to see ourselves as part of a historical process. It locks down our imagination and narrows

our understanding of freedom to that of a scarce commodity that only a few can access. We challenge internalized white supremacy in mostly white sections of the Left to push against the many negative impacts it has on the ability of white activists to positively relate to people of color-led collective action and collective organizing as well as multiracial collaborative organizing. The fact is, internalized white supremacy's worldview of inherent hierarchy, domination, "us versus them," fear-based competition for survival, ahistorical individualism, and self-blaming as opposed to systemic power analysis, negatively impacts white people's lives and work for justice.

Power of Liberation

Anti-racism is a process of seeing the power of liberation as abundant and socially necessary for the physical, emotional, and psychological health of all people. White supremacy leads white people to believe that only certain people can have access to power and that those certain people constitute a ruling class made up, primarily, of white people. Anti-racism is a commitment to changing this worldview through struggles to transform the conditions in society. When we say "anti-racist," we mean the work that makes those changes, and the process of political development white people must go through to actually believe that a liberated world is possible and that all people can—and must—have power over their lives.

By "organizing" we mean breaking the solidarity of white people to the ruling class, by breaking off any and all sections of white communities that we, as white anti-racists, can. History has demonstrated that key constituencies in white communities are more likely to break from the ruling class based on their own experiences exploitation and oppression and their struggles for equality and justice. People who are women, working-class, queer, transgender and gender variant, disabled, and/or Jewish have historically moved to the Left and have been anti-racist leaders in this country. We believe that powerful, dynamic movements can and will come from these constituencies, and that their leadership is key to moving significant numbers of white people to work in a multiracial movement for collective liberation.

We also believe that white anti-racist leadership and organizing in white communities for economic and social justice is necessary, and that such organizing can and must connect to issues in communities of color and create opportunities for solidarity, collaboration, and multiracial alliance building. But critically, this organizing needs to be done both to build broad white support for struggles in communities of color and to liberate white people from the soul-crushing, body-punishing, mind-distorting, white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy.

The goals for white anti-racist organizing are to shift any and all sectors of white communities away from an allegiance to the ruling class and towards active solidarity with liberation movements coming out of communities of color in the United States and around the world. To do this, white anti-racist organizing needs to unlock the imagination of white consciousness to conceive of liberation and believe it is possible, and the best way to do this is through firsthand experience. The Occupy movement, the global justice movement, the struggles for immigrant rights, reconstruction in New Orleans post-Katrina, and so many other struggles, provide incredible opportunities for transformative experiences—not just participating in one event but being part of a movement. The job of white anti-racist leaders and organizers, then, is to think of the immediate goals of these actions and experiences, while also thinking long-term about developing critical consciousness and anti-racist leadership in white communities. This involves supporting people who participate in activism with political education, mentorship, reflection space to make sense of their experiences, and help planning next steps to continue their efforts, grounded in a vision and strategy of collective liberation.

For Catalyst, white anti-racist organizing is shorthand for how can we move as many white people in this country to a revolutionary agenda with a collective liberation vision, in solidarity and partnership with progressive and Left leadership from communities of color. We see white supremacy as one of the primary organizing principles of this country that shapes the class structure and political system. Strategically, then, white supremacy is a key part of the foundation that we can tear out from under the ruling class to upset this oppressive system and unleash the possibility of collective liberation.

1 The politics and strategy of Catalyst in this essay are the result of collective study, experiences, reflections, and synthesis. While I am no longer a member of Catalyst, the "we" throughout this essay, refers to Catalyst. As a founder and co-coordinator of Catalyst, my politics and the politics of Catalyst have a high level of unity. Current members of Catalyst provided feedback on this essay. Given hat the strategy reviewed here comes from collective effort, it is important to recognize the incredible people who have been members and those who continue to be members of Catalyst collective. With love and gratitude to Alia Trindle, Amie Fishman, Ari Clemenzi, Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward, Clare Bayard, Ingrid Chapman, Josh Warren-White, Kerry Levenberg, Missy Longshore, Molly McClure, and Rebecca Tumposky.

STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

White Anti-Racist Organizing and Building Left Organization and Movement

An Interview with the Heads Up Collective

Grassroots organizer Suzanne Pharr wrote, "While the Right is united by their racism, sexism, and homophobia in their goal to dominate all of us, we are divided by our own racism, sexism, and homophobia." In the days after September 11, 2001, Pharr's statement could be felt all around us. Those of us who formed Heads Up had been working proactively to take on these divisions in the global justice movement, focusing on anti-racism and multiracial alliance building. We knew that an anti-war movement would emerge to protest the war the Bush administration would launch after 9/11. We knew that racial and economic justice organizations would work to build a movement against the war at home and the war abroad. We knew that a mostly white peace movement would become the most visible anti-war effort and that it would be largely disconnected from grassroots community organizing in working-class communities and communities of color.

We also knew that there was an energized, radical, mostly, but not all, white anti-authoritarian wing of the global justice movement that would take action against the war. We had played major roles building up that movement and in the internal debates about anti-racism, white privilege, the importance of locally based economic and racial justice organizing. The Heads Up Collective formed to build alliances by strengthening a white anti-racist/anti-imperialist sector of activists in the San Francisco Bay Area. While knowing how powerful the divisions are that Pharr outlines, we also knew from history and our own experience the power of movements that proactively challenge racism, sexism, and homophobia as core to their work to build another world.

In the winter of 2006, celebrating the fifth anniversary of the group, this interview was conducted with members of Heads Up to reflect on our experience and draw lessons from our work.[1]

Can you give us an overview of the history, politics, strategy, and organizational structure of the Heads Up Collective?

Rahula Janowski: I joined Heads Up several months after it was formed. I was coming from a history of organizing and activism within the anarchist community on the West Coast, and like many people, not only was I inspired and amazed by the huge demonstrations in Seattle in 1999, but my eyes were opened by the huge discussions that flared up in the aftermath about the ways that racism played out in that resistance. Then when 9/11 hit, I felt (as did many of us) a lot of urgency to get organized in order to resist whatever may come from the United States in response, knowing that the brunt of it was going to fall largely on people of color. Heads Up was a perfect space for me to step into. While the group is multi-tendency with anarchists, Marxists, and other radicals, anarchist politics are core to how Heads Up operates and thinks about strategy and vision.

Our mission statement says, "We work from the foundation that all people have the right to housing, food, healthcare, meaningful work and healthy communities. We believe in the need for revolutionary change and the liberation of all people from the systems of white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, heterosexism, the gender binary system and imperialism."

Initially, the work of Heads Up was focused on direct support for anti-war formations led by radical people of color, specifically the 911 Solidarity Committee and *War Times* (a free, radical newspaper dedicated to showing the true cost of the war). Our overarching goal is to participate in the building of a multiracial, revolutionary movement in the Bay Area. Our strategies for working towards that goal include operating as a formation of white anti-racists within the broad movements in the Bay Area; supporting grassroots organizations, led by people of color and working-class people, fighting domestic imperialism; and developing and supporting anti-racist analysis, practice, and leadership in the mostly white sectors of the movement, in particular the anti-war and global justice movements.

Over the past year we've developed an organizing strategy that breaks our work into four main areas, all of which work towards our goals:

1. We work with other white activists to support the leadership of anti-imperialist, anti-racist white people doing work in the largely white sectors of the antiwar and global justice movements;
2. We work in solidarity with radical organizations led by people of color and working-class people by providing political and material support;
3. We work to help build relationships, trust, and unity between individuals and organizations in various sectors of the movement through collaborative work, relationship building, and developing and sharing analysis and strategy;
4. And we do internal development, working on developing our own skills and analysis while increasing our capacity to do work individually and as a group, and to provide leadership within our group and within our movements.

Heads Up is a collective. Some of the broad characteristics of this kind of organizing model are: a commitment to egalitarianism within the group, consensus-based decision-making, and an adherence to prefigurative political practice. Many of the things I hope to see in that world are best manifested in the here and now through collectives—things like shared leadership; attention to interpersonal dynamics and how they reflect larger social issues; sharing of resources, be they material goods, relationships, or skills; and accountability to the people you live and work with. I think the collective is the best organizing model for practicing prefigurative politics.

Heads Up is a closed group, which means that we bring in new members in an intentional way once or twice a year.

Although many of the organizations we are allied with have a non-profit structure, we're all volunteer, operating with no budget at all. This allows for a lot of autonomy and integrity, but it also leads to some capacity issues, as everyone in the group is also working for a living on top of their Heads Up commitments.

Our approach to leadership is that each member is assumed to be capable of providing leadership and expected to do so. Leadership within

the group is shared, shifting, and in some cases rotating. We have point people that move different areas of external work forward. We share leadership through our internal coordinating body, called the IPG, the Internal Planning Group. This body is entrusted with keeping track of our internal process, mapping out when we have certain discussions, following decision-making processes through several meetings, making sure things don't fall through the cracks. The creation of the IPG formalized something that was already happening informally, by making it intentional, specific, and accountable; that is, there were always people who would do this work, but it was not an acknowledged role, and thus not very accountable. Now it is, and it's a rotating role, which everyone in the group is expected to play at some point. Developing our politics, our analysis, and strategies continues to be shared work, and decisions about what we will do are not made by the IPG. Our collective process leads to analysis and politics that are fuller and richer, not to mention more representative of all members than if one or two people were in charge of this area of work.

We have a strong emphasis on actively challenging oppressive structures internally when they arise, as they inevitably do in all political work. This means that we pay attention to things like sexism, homophobia, and classism as they manifest within our group. Our main organizational focus is racism, but we are just as committed to undermining, challenging, destroying all systems of oppression.

We value and observe accountability on several levels. We are accountable to each other, and if we say we are going to do something, we do it or we are accountable about why not. We are accountable to our mission, our goals, our politics, and our strategies. And we are accountable to our allies, in particular the organizations led by people of color with whom we have relationships.

Heads Up is a group of all white people, which isn't about identity politics or doing identity-based work, as much as it is about looking strategically at our role as white folks. We understand the role racism has historically played in movements, dividing white workers from workers of color, white queers from queers of color, white women from women of color; and it has happened over and over that movements have been destroyed when white folks have chosen to win gains at the expense of their comrades of color. Anti-racist politics and practice need to take root deeply

within the white-dominated sectors of the anti-war and global justice movements if we want to see things change.

Traditional solidarity politics, the practice of groups of white anti-racists working in direct support of organizations of color, influences us and some of our work is solidarity work; however, we believe that anti-racist white folks have many roles to play in the movement that goes beyond support, and that there are areas where leadership of white folks is needed and appropriate.

Heads Up has been involved in the Palestinian solidarity movement throughout the group's history. Why did you decide to make Palestinian solidarity work a priority? Additionally, Heads Up has developed a specific political approach to that work. Can you explain the evolution of the group's work on Palestine and the political analysis that guides you?

Rahula Janowski: The occupation of Palestine is a remaining direct front of colonialism in this century, propped up by U.S. economic, political, and military support of Israel. At the same time, Palestine is a vibrant and inspiring front in the anti-colonial struggle and struggle for national liberation. The resistance of the people of Palestine, both in Palestine and from the six million in the diaspora, is a huge inspiration, and we need to stand in solidarity with their struggle.

When I joined Heads Up, I was in the process of becoming politicized around Palestine following the events of the second Intifada. The more I learned, the more I realized how deeply unjust the situation was, and the more I wanted to engage in work to change that situation. Over the past five years, my politics around Palestine and the politics of Heads Up overall have developed and deepened quite a bit. We've done a lot of internal education within Heads Up which has brought us to where we are now, with our Palestine solidarity work strongly grounded in Jewish liberation, queer liberation, and an understanding of the role that Christian hegemony plays in how the majority of non-Jewish, non-Arab/Muslim Americans look at the situation in Israel/Palestine.

Getting there started with an intense and deep internal process in early 2002 which began with us signing on to the points of unity of the newly formed Justice in Palestine Coalition, which included supporting the right of

return for the people of Palestine. The right of return refers to the right of Palestinians to return to the villages and homes from which they were forced out with the founding of the state of Israel. There are families living in refugee camps in occupied Palestine, but also throughout the whole Palestinian diaspora, who hold deeds to their land within the state of Israel that they are not allowed to set foot on. Right of return is a key demand, supported by the United Nations, but a surprising number of liberal Left organizations are unwilling to endorse it. We were planning an educational event about Palestine, and asked some of our allies in the 911 Solidarity Committee to speak at it. These allies encouraged us to declare ourselves specifically an anti-Zionist organization. Zionism is broadly understood as the ideology that justifies the formation of the state of Israel in Palestine and the subsequent expulsion of Palestinians and ongoing occupation of Palestine.

Some of the strongest advocates in the group for us to declare ourselves anti-Zionist were Jewish. Other members were uncomfortable with moving in that direction. For some people, the discomfort was about varying ideas of what "Zionism" means, and what it has meant historically as one vision of Jewish liberation. In addition, there were several non-Jews who had major concerns because they associated anti-Zionist with being anti-Jewish. In the process of probing that discomfort and working to respond, we had interesting and problematic dynamics come up. One was that most of us who are culturally Christian had a tendency to sit back while the conflict manifested between the Jewish members of the group, largely due to not knowing how to appropriately engage in a debate about Zionism among Jewish people.

We also realized that those of us who were not Jewish were not strongly grounded in the realities of historical or present-day Jewish oppression. We asked the 911 Solidarity Committee to do a presentation for us, and close allies, about the history of Palestine/Israel and the impacts of Zionism on the surrounding regions. We engaged in internal study around the histories of Jewish oppression. We also began to meet in Jewish and culturally Christian caucuses for several months, with the non-Jews taking on the work of educating ourselves about Christian hegemony—how it manifests in our organization, our movements, and the world. Christian hegemony refers to how Christianity is so pervasive and dominant that is assumed as normal

and anything else is "other." Christian hegemony refers to things like the assumption that everyone celebrates Christmas and everyone believes in the Judeo-Christian god. In our work as the Christian caucus, we delved into how Christian hegemony affects non-Christians, and how it influences everything from cultural norms to foreign policy. For example, Manifest Destiny was the ideology that God granted white Christians the right to colonize the United States and commit genocide against indigenous people.

Ultimately, we never officially declared ourselves "anti-Zionist," but we deepened our collective understanding of what it means to be in solidarity with the people of Palestine, and also what it means to stand for Jewish liberation, and that really shaped our approach to this work. We also did sign on the Justice in Palestine Coalition's points of unity, including right of return for the people of Palestine.

We approach our Palestine solidarity work from a pro-Palestinian, pro-Jewish, and pro-queer perspective. The Israeli/Palestinian situation is often framed as Arabs vs. Jews, with no role other than bystander for culturally Christian Americans. However, the United States and the Christian Right are major players through unconditional support of Israel, supplying money, weapons, and political support. That means that those of us in the United States with anti-racist politics, especially those of us who are culturally Christian, have a responsibility to step up and stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine and to offer strong support to our Jewish comrades who stand in solidarity with Palestine. One way we support our Jewish comrades is through working to recognize and challenge the ways that anti-Jewish analysis is sometimes disguised as support for Palestine. One example of this is the idea that Jews, or Israel, control U.S. foreign policy, when in fact the United States supports Israel as part of its overall imperialist agenda.

In Heads Up we see ourselves having a specific role around challenging this idea that the Israeli/Palestinian situation has "nothing to do with us," or that it is somehow different than other colonial situations, or that it's "too complicated" for folks to grapple with. Just as we see our role as anti-racist white folks as working with other white folks to fight racism, we see our role as culturally Christian Americans in the United States with an articulated politics around Palestine as working with other culturally Christian, mostly white people in the United States to challenge the ways Christian hegemony keeps us apathetic and inactive about Palestine.

Heads Up's Palestine solidarity work has been extensive. One of our earliest projects was helping distribute *War Times,* which offered a radical analysis of the war on Iraq and always had clear Palestine solidarity politics front and center. Heads Up members played significant roles in the local chapters of ISM (International Solidarity Movement, a Palestinian-led group that brings international observers to Palestine) and SUSTAIN (Stop U.S. Tax-funded Aid To Israel Now), as well as Jews for a Free Palestine, a collective of radical Jews opposed to the occupation of Palestine. Several members of Heads Up went to Palestine with ISM, and did report backs upon their return. Two Heads Up members were detained by Israel and refused entry into Palestine because of their political work, which generated mainstream media coverage. Over the years, Heads Up members have been involved in multiple direct actions and civil disobediences, and during the lead up to the war on Iraq, when Direct Action to Stop the War (DASW) mobilized thousands of people to take to the streets, Heads Up members were part of an affinity group called Global Intifada, which worked to keep Palestine on the agenda of DASW. We've organized educational events specifically reaching out to the largely white sectors of the anti-war and global justice movements, and hosted film nights about Palestine as part of our monthly film series.

As part of the Justice in Palestine Coalition, we've provided security for over a dozen events and demonstrations. Over the past several years, a small but aggressive group of hardcore Israel supporters and the rightwing group "protest warrior" have mobilized to turn out for as many pro-Palestine events as they can manage. They often bring bullhorns and Israeli flags, and the things they have to say (or shout, as the case may be) are often inflammatory and racist. On several occasions, they have physically assaulted people. In addition to anti-Arab and anti-Muslim crap, they often specifically verbally target pro-Palestinian Jews and queers. Our role as security for situations like this has been to act as a buffer between these Zionists and people in the demonstration, with the understanding that while it may be objectionable to us to be face to face with someone spewing racist and hateful rhetoric, it's much easier for us than it is for the people they are targeting, people who may have lost family to Israel's occupation of Palestine, people who may themselves be refugees as a result of the occupation of Palestine.

Any conflict would serve the purposes of the Zionists, and so part of our task is to de-escalate any potentially volatile situations. When we coordinate security, we focus on preparing people to keep their cool in the face of severe provocation. To do that, we need to discuss things like what it means when the Zionists target queers or Jews, particularly when queers and Jews are part of our security crew. So, when we coordinate security, we conduct a training ahead of time on how to use de-escalating body language along with political education, and we are always clear about our politics around our role as culturally Christian people in the United States. The other thing is that when we provide security, we do so with an understanding that we will call out anti-Jewish oppression when we see it, and that we expect (and get) the support of the leadership of the event. This usually means confronting a cast of usual suspects, mostly older white men who are pushing tired Jewish conspiracy theories.

Heads Up works closely with Jews For a Free Palestine. For example, when Israel began bombing Lebanon in the spring of 2006, JFFP and other Jewish groups organized a massive demonstration in front of the Israeli consulate in San Francisco, as well as a civil disobedience that had about fifteen Jews taking arrest in protest of the actions of the state of Israel, and Heads Up helped with security. Over the summer of 2006, an ad hoc group of Jews of conscience, including folks from JFFP, organized several civil disobediences, and Heads Up consistently offered logistical support, outreaching for the actions, acting as police liaison, and taking photos and posting them on our local Independent Media Center.

Right now, the situation in Palestine, and in particular in Gaza, is really disturbing. Palestinian civil society has made a call for people of conscience to engage in a campaign of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS), to bring economic and political pressure to bear on the state of Israel. Heads Up is committed for the long haul to standing in solidarity with the people of Palestine, and also to working to support other folks from our community to take that stand as well.

Rahula mentioned Direct Action to Stop the War (DASW). Heads Up focused on building DASW through most of 2003. Can you explain what DASW was and the role it played in the growing anti-war movement at that time?

Libbey Goldberg: As the war on Iraq was escalating, so too was anti-war organizing internationally. Mass marches and direct action were taking place regularly. In the Bay Area, radical activists coming out of the global justice movement founded Direct Action to Stop the War (DASW) in October 2002 following an overnight sit-in and morning blockade at the San Francisco Federal Building, in opposition to the U.S. Congress's authorization of the use of force against Iraq. DASW set out to up the level of effective, non-violent militant opposition and encouraged people to form affinity groups and prepare for a mass shut down of the financial district in San Francisco the day after the United States went to war. The movement in the United States was galvanized by the international anti-war movement and on February 15, 2003, over fifteen million people marched in sixty countries. This global day of action was the largest mobilization of people for peace and justice in history.

During this time, DASW held weekly spokescouncil meetings with representatives from a growing number of affinity groups. Affinity groups are tight political units in which six to twelve people come together on the basis of political or tactical unity and take action. A spokescouncil is a democratic decision-making body in which representatives from affinity groups make decisions using consensus. Large spokescouncils, like DASW, also have workgroups that take on specific areas such as media, communications, and medical and operate to advance the overall goals and plans established by the spokescouncil. A map of the financial district was drawn that highlighted dozens of targets that different affinity groups took responsibility for shutting down using creative non-violent direct action. Targets included corporations like Bechtel that profit from war, major intersections and freeway exits, and the Federal Building. Just as in the Seattle shutdown of the WTO, affinity groups joined together to form clusters that could take on strategic targets. The goal was to exercise people power, shut down business as usual, galvanize the U.S. anti-war movement to step up against this empire and, finally, to send a message of solidarity to those struggling in the global south who are on the frontlines resisting U.S. imperialism.

I joined the Heads Up Collective in the winter of 2002. I was new to the Bay Area, looking for anti-racist political community, and enraged that we were about to drop bombs on the people of Iraq. As a result of this heartfelt

rage, I was moved to take to the streets. I joined Global Intifada, because it was the affinity group within which I had friends and comrades. It was as simple as that for me at first. But as the U.S. invasion and ensuing occupation progressed and I became more familiar with the mostly white, direct action focused anti-war activists, I began to understand the significance of Heads Up's participation in DASW.

Global Intifada was at the center of organizing and leadership within DASW, was the most visibly multiracial affinity group (along with Freedom Uprising), and took the lead on creative and militant actions that successfully made the connections between Iraq, Palestine, and U.S. imperialism across the globe. There were at least four members of Heads Up in Global Intifada, and our explicitly anti-racist politics and practice contributed to healthy internal working dynamics within the group and moved us to prioritize the leadership of activists of color within the larger DASW. Other members of Heads Up were doing the same things in other corners of DASW. We had folks in leadership within the media working group, within other affinity groups, within the communications working group, planning and facilitating democratic decision-making processes at meetings with upwards of 250 people in the days before the shutdown of the financial district.

One of the primary goals of Heads Up has been to bridge the gap between economic and racial justice struggles and the global justice and anti-war movements. We saw some specific possibilities for this within DASW that could greatly strengthen its efforts. One was to support the involvement and leadership of grassroots community-based organizations in DASW. In the media work group we advocated to have media spokespeople from racial and economic justice organizations as a way to connect the war at home and abroad. We then asked organizers in half a dozen organizations we had relationships with if they would be media spokes, explaining our goals for asking them and offering ways we could support their participation through the process. This resulted in leaders from racial and economic justice groups speaking at DASW press conferences and rallies and fielding interviews with the media. Our goal was not just to diversify who speaks for the anti-war movement, but to forefront a working class-based racial justice analysis of the war. One of the other ways we implemented this goal was to have intentional one-on-one conversations with other white activists within

DASW about the importance of an anti-racist and antiimperialist framework in the anti-war effort, about making the connections between the occupation in Palestine and the invasion of Iraq, and about taking leadership from organizers of color. Those of us in Heads Up involved in DASW set out to have these conversations, with the explicit goals of building relationships and trust, as opposed to accusing people of not being down enough.

Operating primarily through the use of affinity groups, work groups and the spokes-council meetings, DASW democratically coordinated a mass effort by ten to twenty thousand people that successfully shut down the financial district in March 2003. This shutdown was by far and away the most inspiring direct action effort I've ever seen. There was not even a glimmer of chance that business could go as usual downtown that day: everywhere you looked, at every hour of the day, there was another shut down intersection or march down Market Street. It would have been damn near impossible for anyone in the vicinity of the financial district to not be aware of this resistance to the war. The cops couldn't keep up. What was so brilliant was that so many prime locations and targets were hit, one after the next, sometimes simultaneously throughout the day. The DASW strategy of coordinating the actions but not controlling the details of them made this possible. The shutdown of SF greatly deepened my understanding of what people power means in the context of direct action and what is possible. DASW persisted through 2004, coordinating over a dozen local protests against corporations with ties to the war effort and sending hundreds of activists to protests in Cancun against the World Trade Organization, to Miami against the Free Trade Area of the Americas, and to New York against the Republican National Convention.

In May of 2003, we played major roles organizing a Racial Justice Day of Action. That day is the example that shines the most for me in highlighting the uncommon alliances made within DASW between anti-war direct action-oriented activists and leaders from local economic and racial justice community organizations. This collaboration resulted in an overwhelmingly inspiring show of people power. It began with a press conference at city hall, a march down Market Street, and a large demonstration with a direct action component at the Israeli Consulate. The banners and visuals were tight, there was great turnout, and the tactics were successful. Freedom Uprising,

Global Intifada, and others in DASW crafted participation and messaging that made the connections between the War at home against poor people, people of color, and immigrants, and the wars abroad in Iraq, Palestine, and Afghanistan. The day ended in Oakland with a rally for immigrant workers unionizing the hotels.

Heads Up meetings were a space to share information, support one another, and strategize on how to really build DASW to have the greatest impact possible. While our efforts in DASW and the shutdown in San Francisco didn't stop our government from invading and occupying Iraq (with conditions worsening by the day as we speak), we helped develop and strengthen relationships, politics, and practice towards multiracial grassroots movements for justice in this country and against U.S. imperialism abroad.

From the start, Heads Up worked in the immigrant-rights movement. Why did you make that struggle a priority as an anti-imperialist collective? What goals guide the work and what strategies have you used to reach those goals?

Clare Bayard: Right before Heads Up formed due to 9/11, the immigrant-rights movement in the United States was gaining ground in some significant ways, including a real possibility of pushing through not just driver's licenses regardless of immigration status, but maybe even a general amnesty. But 9/11 was particularly devastating to this movement. We formed to address the domestic war as well as wars abroad, and it was immediately clear that attacks on immigrants, particularly targeting West/South Asian and North African communities, was one of the primary fronts. But even more than that, Heads Up formed with people who had previously been doing solidarity and collaborative organizing with immigrant-led organizations, and we knew that some of these organizations were vital forces in moving forward radical, community-based politics bridging local racial and economic justice with a global justice framework.

Anti-war work, both addressing the national crackdown on immigrants of color and also challenging the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, was being done in very solid and sophisticated ways by immigrant communities. We saw how the work of INS Watch, in forcing San Francisco to declare

itself an INS Raid-Free Zone and pass sanctuary legislation, inspired other organizations like the All Nations Alliance in Denver in their work against the PATRIOT Act. We also looked to organizations like Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), based in New York City's low-income South Asian community, which immediately after 9/11 engaged in path breaking anti-detention work.

So we saw solidarity work as a critical piece of building anti-imperialist struggle rooted in the targeted communities. Directly after 9/11, INS Watch, the SF Day Labor Program, and other self-organized immigrant organizations took a strong lead in not just fighting back against the immediate targeting of anyone perceived to be Arab and/or Muslim, but actively challenging the scapegoating of some immigrants as "terrorists and criminals" versus other "good immigrants." Immigrant communities in the United States have lots of experience in dealing with this divide-and-conquer strategy historically used to drive wedges between different communities of color whose common interests outweighed their differences. These organizations also took a strong role in the mobilizations of spring 2006 in developing "Black-Brown Unity" work to combat attempts to pit immigrants, especially in Latin American and South Asian communities, against African Americans.

An early lesson for Heads Up in this work came out of an unproductive open coalition meeting soon after 9/11. While the meeting was hosted by economic justice immigrant-rights groups, the meeting itself was dominated by older white activists, mostly men, who ignored the leadership of immigrants in the room. We were outraged, but didn't know how to respond. After this meeting, the immigrant-based organizations we had relationships with decided to focus on building power in their own communities.

Our work took shape more clearly on two levels: continuing solidarity work to support the organizing efforts of immigrant-led economic justice groups; but also taking more initiative, along with other white anti-racists, to build commitment to immigrant rights in the mostly white anti-war/global justice movement through political education and organizing.

The goals of our work for the past five years have been: 1) to support radical and progressive organizing based in immigrant communities; 2) to organize a larger, more effective, accountable movement of white people

supporting immigrant justice; and 3) to contribute to bridge building between the immigrant-rights movement and the majority-white anti-war/global justice movement that is often more focused abroad.

Building long-term relationships with immigrant organizations has been foundational to our ability to meet any of these goals. We have provided solidarity support in forms ranging from childcare, food support, collecting donations and resources, doing security on marches and actions, turning people out for actions, leading and supporting political education events, doing media work locally and nationally, door-knocking, driving, recruiting volunteers, picketing, helping with outreach for Know Your Rights trainings, and so on. We've testified at police commissions, city hall, and the state capital, speaking out as white citizens against attacks on immigrants, where the only other white people speaking out about immigration have been organized racist forces. We have worked on electoral campaigns to pass a living wage, to defeat anti-poor people legislation, and to elect protenant, pro-worker, pro-immigrant candidates to local offices.

As a small volunteer-based group with limited capacity, we have always chosen to focus on a couple of key organizations in order to build accountable, long-term relationships. Our work with INS Watch and the Day Labor Program led to our participation as a founding member of the Deporten a la Migra Coalition, which formed in spring 2004 in response to INS raids at a San Francisco hotel. DLM, anchored by the amazing radical organizers at St. Peter's Housing Committee, has been a major locus of building the left wing of the immigrant-rights movement since its inception, spreading into regional work in 2005 and national work in 2006. We have tried to be responsive when specific moments of crisis or opportunity have come up. During 2002, when thousands of Cambodians were threatened with deportation, we participated in the Oakland rally organized for the national day of action by APIForCE (Asian Pacific Islanders for Community Empowerment), a member group of Asian Pacific Islanders Coalition Against War, which we'd done march security for in the past. Or when the Taco Bell Truth Tour came through town, we came out to support Florida's Coalition of Immokalee Workers, who have been an important organization bridging working-class, immigrant-based resistance with the global justice movement.

At the end of 2003, after Direct Action to Stop the War's major actions against the Iraq war that spring, DASW passed a major strategic proposal that didn't address attacks on immigrants as part of its anti-war work. We brought serious concerns to that process, but were pushed to recognize that we had the work and relationships in this area that were necessary for DASW to do that work accountably, and basically that if we wanted to see it happen we needed to step up. So we formed the No Borders working group of DASW. The working group did some successful work but was always majority members of Heads Up, so as DASW lost momentum we streamlined back on the work. Deporten a la Migra had formed, and we prioritized working in that coalition, with a goal of building bridges between DLM and the mostly white anti-war movement.

DLM formed to address INS abuses and state-sponsored attacks on immigrants, and to emphasize a radical immigrant-rights agenda that "the land belongs to those who work it." But with the explosion of the Minutemen, a new cycle of racist border vigilantes, DLM also took on challenging such overt white supremacist organizing connected, as it is, to legislative attacks. In this work, Heads Up was asked to start speaking more at actions as white people organized against attacks on immigrants, to challenge the Minutemen as white people, and to talk about our own self-interest in fighting for dignity and human rights for all immigrants. We also connected with the anarchist-identified formations that came together in reaction to the Minutemen, facilitating communication and planning with DLM's organizations based in working-class immigrant membership.

In the past year, we moved a step forward during the spring's mass street mobilizations led by immigrants around the country. With millions of people taking to the streets for immigrant rights, we organized a core of already motivated and passionate white anti-racist immigrant-rights activists to do more intentional, collective work organizing in white communities.

This core of people strategized and worked together to recruit people for the mass mobilizations, including forming several delegations of white folks to consciously and visibly represent an organized presence of white people allying with immigrants. We developed talking points for outreach and for media; wrote to and shared letters with our families, friends, and co-workers about the importance of immigrant justice; wrote guest editorials in

newspapers; and wrote petitions and open letters that we used as organizing tools to mobilize more white people for actions.

Heads Up has worked alongside white staff in immigrant organizations to improve our practice and analysis as white people in this movement, including co-writing a piece for the ACLU's national anti-Minutemen action kit focused on white folks in this movement. We also wrote an open letter to white activists with our sister organization, Catalyst Project. We have also built dialogue and relationships nationally with non-immigrant organizations with goals similar to ours.

Heads Up runs the Televising the Revolution Radical Film Series. Can you give an overview of the program and explain its objectives and strategy?

Mel Pilbin Baiser: The film series is a monthly movie night that benefits local grassroots economic and racial justice organizations and anti-war and global justice organizing. We see the program as a creative way to bring all the components of our strategy together into one night. Organizing the film series over the past few years has been an incredible learning experience, and we've been really surprised by how successful it has become. The program has not only allowed us to provide material and political solidarity to radical grassroots organizations locally and internationally, but has challenged us to really articulate our anti-racist, anti-imperialist politics to a broad audience.

The fourth Tuesday of every month, on the back patio at El Rio (a local bar and community space), the four prongs of the Heads Up organizing strategy overlap and interact to create a fun, educational, and strategic movement building opportunity. It's not without its challenges and limitations, but the Televising the Revolution Radical Film Series has been a chance to provide solidarity, interact with other white activists and organizers around white supremacy and racial justice, do relationship and movement building, and provide a space for political education and internal political and leadership development.

The film series has been a huge success. We've managed to raise a significant amount of money for each organization. One major strength is that little is required of the beneficiary organization other than showing up

to give a short presentation about their work. We try and keep the event fun and social while rooting it in accountable anti-imperialist and anti-racist politics. The film series helps to provide exposure for a variety of grassroots organizations focused on base building in different communities or on different themes and issues.

Heads Up uses the film series to better articulate our own political vision. We share why we organize as a group of white folks working explicitly around imperialism and racism and how we see it as a strategy towards multiracial movement building. It has also been a helpful space for me to talk about what it means to be a white working-class queer engaged in anti-racist work. There are many ways in which I materially benefit from this white supremacist system while at the same time I am also invested in working for my own liberation and the liberation of other poor and working-class white people. I think it's important to acknowledge that we all (aside from maybe ruling-class whites) have something to gain from bringing down this system.

Through the combination of groups, films and themes, Heads Up works to put out complex analysis that challenges the either/or model and pushes folks to see the connections between movements. For example, we did a benefit for Just Cause Oakland, a tenants' rights organization dedicated to base building. Instead of showing a film about gentrification in Oakland, we screened a film about displacement in New Orleans post-Katrina and one highlighting land struggle in Bolivia. This allowed Just Cause to connect their local struggle to national and international struggles, which share the common themes of racism, displacement, and land. In October, we did a benefit for the San Francisco Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) with a focus on Palestine. We invited a speaker from ADC as well as an Israeli activist who is part of the military resisters refusing to support the occupation. During Gay Pride month we hosted a Queers and Gentrification film night as a benefit for a local Filipino organization (a community that has faced major displacement by gentrification, particularly in San Francisco's SOMA district). We had speakers discussing the role of class privileged white queers in gentrification. We invited organizers who had worked with FIERCE in New York City to fight gentrification efforts at the Christopher St. Pier. In this case, it was primarily poor and low income queers of color who were most impacted by the gentrification playing out.

This film night was an attempt to reach out to different queer communities, develop anti-racist class-consciousness, and get people involved.

The Televising the Revolution Film Series advances our Heads Up organizing strategy by allowing us the opportunity to provide solidarity to and build relationships with people of color and working-class-led grassroots organizations. It is also a space to build community with other white activists engaged in radical organizing and promote and support anti-imperialist and anti-racist politics. As part of this, we developed the Heads Up Racial and Economic Justice listserv through which we maintain contact with people who have attended film nights over the years. This listserv is an organizing tool to promote local community-based and racial justice-oriented events. We also put out one e-mail a month with links to articles and analysis we find helpful.

In the past three years of the program, we have raised over $10,000 for twenty-nine mostly local grassroots organizations and movements.

One of the primary goals of Heads Up is to support one another's development as effective, strategic and dynamic anti-racist organizers. Would you explain why this is a priority and how the group does this?

Marc Mascarenhas-Swan: Taking a step back, I feel that the act of joining or forming a permanent political organization can set the stage for a commitment to develop as an organizer, to be accountable to a group of people, and to see ourselves as part of our larger movements for justice; this is something that I found hard to do as an individual, or as a participant in more ad hoc groups.

Within this context, in Heads Up we endeavor to form structures and practices for mutual development as organizers who are thinking critically, committing to ongoing study, and supporting each other in advancing our collective strategy. So how and why do we do this?

From its inception, Heads Up has had a commitment to the goal of mutual development and support in anti-racist practice. Like many organizations we experienced growing pains as we realized we were in it for the long haul and applied ourselves to the task of articulating a clear, focused strategic direction. Sure, we were forming accountable relationships to mass-based organizations, supporting and developing anti-racist leadership of

white folks in our constituencies, and trying to bridge sectors; but how did we make the decisions of how to prioritize work? Did we have a collective understanding of why these different strands of work were important? How should we focus our internal political development? As we held these questions, simultaneously, we moved more consciously and confidently into identifying as members of Heads Up, and seeing the collective as our primary political home.

Holding ourselves accountable to this strategy requires an ongoing commitment to evaluation and criticism of our work, and we have several mechanisms for this within the collective. Firstly, accountability to the group is structured into our meeting time as a fixed agenda item (accountability and recognition). This is a space to self-criticize, hold each other accountable, and check in on how responsibilities and tasks are progressing. It is also a space to appreciate one another's contributions and give each other positive feedback.

Secondly, we have a rotating internal planning group, that's responsible for planning general meetings. The IPG, which Rahula explained, maintains a wider view, planning two to three months in advance to create space for reflection that the group has asked for, and then framing discussions with overarching goals that give us a sense of direction. It's easy to get caught up in the moment and lose track of priorities, so I find it helpful to have folks bottom-lining rooting our day-to-day work in the bigger picture that we have collectively decided upon. Especially during slower periods following times of intense organizing, we will create a time for those taking leadership in a given area to present their thoughts on the work and evaluate with the collective. This gives members a chance to reflect on the work and draw out lessons that all of us gain from. As a group, we have different perspectives, experiences, and knowledge, and these differences are strengths when doing group reflection that encourages everyone's participation.

Lastly, we have annual retreats, when we have a space to go deep, challenge ourselves, and celebrate and connect as friends. In preparation for our retreats we reach out to allied organizations and movement elders to gather their perspectives on the state of the Left and strategic opportunities. We ask them about the work they'll be prioritizing in the coming year and we factor this into our discussions. If we have worked closely with a group we will ask if they have feedback for us. We do this because we want to be

accountable in our work to our allies and this helps each of us develop as more effective organizers.

In these spaces we try to promote an atmosphere that encourages criticism of oneself and others in balance with appreciation of oneself and others. We feel it is vital to consciously be building relationships with each other in work and play; this supports honest and healthy communication.

We endeavor to create an organizational structure and culture that makes space for us to play leadership roles in the organization, take responsibility for the functioning of the group, and move it forward. We feel it is vital that folks more experienced in a particular area collaborate with those less experienced to support their growth. We have discussions about the ways that systems of oppression impact internal dynamics, particularly leadership. We recognize that people with privilege are socialized to be leaders while women and working-class people in particular are socialized to take orders or face punishment. We need to be real about how this impacts our organization and take proactive steps to build equality. We have a commitment to being a majority-women and majority-queer organization and we prioritize people from working-class backgrounds. We do this because we believe that leadership from oppressed peoples is central to building effective movements.

We focus on internal development, not only to be more effective revolutionaries, but also to sustain the collective leadership of our organization. We have an ongoing commitment to skill sharing, for instance. Devoting an hour to public speaking techniques and challenges, or how to do a fundraising pitch. We support each other in stepping up into new areas —assisting with writing an article, talking through challenging dynamics in our organizing efforts, or speaking at a rally.

We also have an internal political education program, called Homeskool. We take turns pulling together readings, and leading the sessions. Homeskools have included Palestine 101, Patriarchy and Imperialism, Anti-Racist Organizing in the White Working Class, Marxism, Anarchism, Community Organizing Models, Left Movements in Latin America, and Indigenous Resistance. The goal of these sessions is to pull from different political traditions, to inform strategy and tactics, to understand the political landscape we are operating in, and to become better organizers.

What are key lessons from your work with Heads Up?

Laura McNeill: During my involvement in Heads Up I learned a lot about creating the foundation for a collective, as I played an active role in leadership, listening, and learning. I discovered some of the "why" and"how" different types of organizations are formed.

We came together for various reasons. Mine were out of a basic need to gather after 9/11 and get support from people I trusted who had similar anti-racist politics. I needed to talk about what was happening, and figure out how I could take action against the hate and racism that was playing out in my community and abroad. I wanted to understand the surge in nationalism and patriotism that was playing out as my neighbors passed out American flags to strangers. I wanted to attend the vigils for those who had died on 9/11, and be able to stand strong when I heard my family members making anti-Arab comments and when I received racist e-mails. I needed support to voice my own confusion and I needed to be challenged when my internal desires wanted to make things simple and place people into "good" and "bad" roles.

In Heads Up, I trusted folks enough to ask questions, be honest, and own my mistakes. One meeting stands out in particular—we were bringing our own definitions of what we thought imperialism was/is, so we could have a discussion. I had written down some stuff, but really had no idea. In the meeting I was able to push through my uncomfortable feeling of not knowing and share my thoughts. Heads Up made me feel comfortable with not knowing everything and still supported me as an equal leader. This felt like a big deal to me in the heart of Bay Area politics and a good model for doing this work for the long haul.

Through the process of supporting one another where each of us were at, educating ourselves about the issues, practicing sharing leadership, and taking action in various forms, I built my own confidence to speak out and take action against the wars at home and abroad. Through sharing our stories, I developed a more complex understanding of the issues, learned the power of being vulnerable and honest, and sharpened skills for dialoguing with people in my circles of influence as a way to make change. Through our actions, I gained a deeper sense of trust and commitment with Heads Up members. One project a couple of us worked on was the distribution of *War*

Times, a newspaper that was rooted in multiracial leadership. I came to value myself more as an activist and leader for social change.

Moving to a new state after this experience, I realized how important it was to work collectively for the long haul, to never feel like you're alone. Reflecting on my experiences with Heads Up, I have been able to gather with like-minded individuals and form Groundwork, a collective that is taking action in various forms for racial and economic justice in Madison, Wisconsin. Now that I have kids of my own, I realize in my heart that the work of trying to build a healthier world for all people is a lifelong process.

Josh Connor: The lessons that I learned from being a member of Heads Up are ongoing. I learned immensely from both the successes and challenges within Heads Up. I gained practical experience in long-term alliance building within anti-imperialist struggles for racial and economic justice. I refined and expanded my ideas about the role of leadership from white activists and organizers in the struggle against white supremacy.

Before joining Heads Up, I was confident that white activists should organize our own people against racism and that people of color should lead the struggle for racial justice. I worried that the best that I could do would be to prevent white people from being roadblocks on the path towards social justice. While I still see the very real possibility for white people to end up being roadblocks, I also see a great potential for white activists and organizers to play vital roles in multiracial alliances and to take on leadership roles within our work in solidarity with those people most negatively impacted by white supremacy.

Through my work in the Heads Up Collective, I developed a sense of the necessary balance between theory and practice, between political education and action. All the successes and challenges of working in a committed, collective organization have contributed to my current political work.

Rahula Janowski: Through my work with Heads Up I've learned an important thing about being politically engaged while being a parent, which is that people can only support you if you make it clear what your needs are. I became pregnant during the first year I was in Heads Up. Towards the end of my pregnancy, as I was getting ready to take a leave of absence from my paid work and from organizing, I was really worried abut being able to come

back to the political work once my "maternity leave" was over. I've been politically active and engaged most of my adult life and it's important to me, and I was really excited about Heads Up and wanted to be able to remain a member of this new group once I'd had my baby. So I made a request of the group: that Heads Up make a specific and articulated commitment to being a parent- and child-friendly organization. I didn't know what parenting a baby while engaging in political work would look like, and no one else in the group did either, but the group stepped up to my request and made that explicit commitment. I hope that Heads Up can be an example for other groups, because it hurts the movement when there's no room for people to continue to participate once they have kids.

Clare Bayard: When Heads Up made an intentional decision that we wanted to be a parent and kid friendly group, it was based both on how valuable the leadership of our parent-to-be (and future parents) was to the group, and also our desire to learn how to be more a part of multigenerational organizing culture. The parents in our group have held down major areas of our work, and Heads Up would have suffered tremendously without their leadership and contributions.

I've only experienced a very diluted form of the things parents deal with daily in our particular circles. The overwhelming demands on capacity, resources and time is only one piece; I had never really noticed the extent to which parents of small children are often made invisible, uncomfortable, or straight-up excluded from so many of the movement spaces I frequent. It has been a real gift to all the non-parents in Heads Up to understand more about some of the barriers to multigenerational organizing, particularly in the majority-white, global justice movement.

Rahula Janowski: One of the hardest lessons I've learned in Heads Up, and probably the most important, is around the importance of leadership development. I came of age politically in a community where we were all new to political work, and we were all the same age, with no mentors or more experienced activists around. In the years following, in all the various activist and organizing projects I was engaged with, leadership development was never discussed, much less practiced. It seemed like there was an unspoken assumption that you either had skills and an ability to provide

leadership, or you didn't, and the people who did owed nothing to the people who didn't in terms of helping them develop those skills and abilities. Given how the various, interlocking systems of oppression work in our society, it's no wonder, then, that the leadership in much of the political work I engaged in was predominantly white, male, and class privileged. And because there was no practice of leadership development, our attempts to change the nature of the leadership were often unsuccessful and frustrating.

In Heads Up, all members are expected to take leadership and to do the work. For a long time, when we brought in new members, there was a very brief process and then they were expected to be able to do everything. Sometimes, this worked. Other times it didn't, and it took us a while to realize that, even if the folks we're bringing in are experienced and have similar politics, there needs to be some sustained and deliberate work around developing their leadership.

There's also a more personal component for me around this lesson. Coming from the anarchist movement, where there is generally no emphasis on leadership development, I found myself impatient with people who didn't step right up, and at the same time, had a hard time accepting the idea that I was in a leadership position in Heads Up. Not accepting that I was in leadership meant I wasn't aware that expressing impatience or frustration with someone had a big impact. A member of the group challenged me and we had a long and rough process around this. Once I was able to move past defensiveness, I realized that if a group's approach is sink or swim, then ultimately the whole group sinks. I also realize that the skills and experience I have are resources, and it's my responsibility to share them with other members of the group … and with the movement. I honestly had never really considered that if I didn't like someone's suggestion, I could actually be supportive of that person in shaping a different suggestion instead of just shooting them down.

Another lesson is that principled and sustained struggle with our comrades can be a crucial part of building an organization's politics and practice. My process around understanding the need for leadership development is one example; another example is the internal process Heads Up went through about Zionism, which I discussed earlier, that led to a much more fully developed politics around Palestine solidarity work. If we engage with our differences in principled and respectful ways, so often it

leads to a deeper understanding of our work, deeper relationships with each other, and far more developed politics.

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1 The politics and strategy of Heads Up were developed through the efforts and reflection of its members. With appreciation for all of the other members of Heads Up over the years: Brooke Atherton El-Amine, Max Toth, Laura McNeill, Elaine Peterson, Kerry Levenberg, Amie Fishman, Clare Bayard, Eric Romann, Rahula Janowski, Mel Pilbin Baiser, Libbey Goldberg, Josh Connor, Marc Mascarenhas-Swan, cory schmanke parrish, Sierra Spingarn, Dara Silverman, Jeff Giaquinto, Jamie Spector, Julia Allen, Sasha Vodnik, Cathy Rion Starr, and Becca Tumposky.

"A STRUGGLE FOR OUR LIVES"

Anti-Racist Organizing in White Rural and Working-Class Communities

An Interview with the Rural Organizing Project in Oregon

With hundreds of volunteer leaders and sixty-five member groups across Oregon, the ROP is a powerful example of a statewide social justice organization with a statewide strategy. At the center of their work for peace, justice and racy is an organizing strategy to develop anti-racist politics, leadership, and action in rural white working-class communities.

What were the conditions that the Rural Organizing Project emerged from and what is the organization's history?

Amy Dudley: Rural Organizing Project (ROP) developed as a progressive rural response to homophobic ballot measures initiated by right-wing organizations that considered rural Oregon to be their political base. In the late '80s and early '90s, the Right was on the prowl for issues and locations to wage culture wars. They were seeking out wedge issues that would effectively divide working-class people from their own economic self-interest and encourage fear and the worst of human nature to create a vacuum that the Right would then fill with "moral" leadership and "family values." Sounds familiar, right? By equating being queer with pedophilia and a list of evils, the Right was able to whip up homophobic fears, focus the mainstream on a non-existent threat, scapegoat a vulnerable group of people, then enter the divide that they had created with anti-queer policies that would distract from the real focus of their platform—to create unfair tax structures,

subsidize the rich, establish corporate welfare, and destroy the social safety net.

So the Right had their plan, now they needed to find communities to launch this attack. Where better than white rural America? Oregon is an incredibly white state, as is much of the Northwest, though that is changing primarily due to a growing Latino/a immigrant population. The state as a whole is 81 percent white, 10 percent Latino/a, 4 percent Asian and Pacific Islander, 2 percent African American, and 1 percent Native American. Most communities of color are concentrated in a few areas of the state, including Oregon's largest city, Portland. Like in many historically white rural communities across the nation, that demographic is shifting. Latino/as make up only 10 percent of the population of the democstate, but that population has increased more than 200 percent since the 1990 census. That growth has occurred in urban centers like Portland, but also in rural communities like Umatilla, Hood River, Morrow, and Jefferson Counties. There is a reason that the Aryan Nation chose to make the Northwest their home. Rural Oregon, like much of rural America, is downwardly mobile, predominantly working-class/working poor, with a tendency to more conservative politics and religious fundamentalism, and a long history of openly white supremacist organizing. All of these factors play a role in why the Right focused their organizing in small towns and rural communities across the United States.

This is where ROP enters the scene. While all of the above is true to some extent about rural America, we are not homogeneous. We don't fit easily into gross stereotypes of hillbillies or rednecks, terms that are intended to make fun of poor, white, rural people. Rural Americans deal with anti-rural sentiment that is most deeply rooted in classism.

While all poor people are oppressed and treated in classist ways, making fun of poor, white, rural people is one of the few places that it is socially acceptable to be classist. In the same way that working-class people are often blamed for perpetuating homophobia or characterized as exceedingly homophobic, poor, white, rural folks are often blamed for perpetuating white supremacy or characterized as exceedingly racist. In both these instances, perhaps it is true that working-class people are more likely to verbally express their homophobia or racism, but it is the wealthy, owning class that is exercising the power to keep these systems of oppression in

place and ultimately use homophobia and racism to keep working people divided from one another. This is not to ignore or diminish the racism or homophobia of working-class people. Those are things that we are working to challenge and change. It has been our experience at ROP that finding solidarity between working-class rural folks and the queer community, and between white rural folks and people of color, and between white rural queer people and immigrant farm workers has been a journey of finding common cause and a shared sense of struggle against the same systems of oppression that are working to keep us all divided and to keep us all down. That is a journey that is much easier to take as a working-class person than as a wealthy person who is invested in keeping the system in place.

The reality is that rural communities can hark back, like all communities, to the radical struggles that we have been a part of—from civil rights to labor struggles to farm worker organizing and indigenous resistance. Our values and our sense of community can be a uniting force against hatred and oppression. This is the hope and belief that ROP is founded on. At its core, ROP is committed to contesting the notion that rural Oregon is a readymade base for the Right.

When the Right brought the culture wars to Oregon, they utilized their politics of division focused on anti-choice, censorship, and creationism efforts as well as the anti-queer statewide Ballot Measure 9. As petitions started showing up outside post offices and grocery stores, justice-minded folk in rural Oregon stepped up. They contacted progressive leadership in urban areas and asked for support. The reality of most urban-based organizing, particularly during campaigns, is that time and resources are focused on where people are most densely concentrated, meaning rural communities are often left out. Undeterred, these same concerned rural folk took what support they could glean from urban supporters and set out on their own traveling the state and holding "Living Room Conversations" that called on people to recognize the human dignity that is innate in every person, to ask themselves what treatment their neighbors were deserving of, and ultimately to talk about what a real democracy requires of its members. From these Living Room Conversations, local human dignity groups were organized.

The defeat of Measure 9 was a huge victory for Oregon as well as the nation. However, within a year, more than twenty local ordinances using the

same language as Measure 9 had been passed in rural communities, underscoring the critical significance of rural organizing for true statewide justice and emphasizing ROP's role resisting the Right's focus on rural Oregon as well as the Left's urban-centric tendency to ignore rural Oregon. The greater legacy for rural Oregon was after the campaign, when each of the newly formed human dignity groups got together and made two decisions: The first was to form Rural Organizing Project as a connection and support to these local groups. The second decision was to hold anti-racism trainings with each of these local groups. While we had been focused on resisting attacks on the queer community and understanding them as a wedge strategy to undermine all civil rights, we quickly realized we needed to expand our initial focus to include immigrant rights. Leaders within ROP and the immigrant community recognized that we shared an opponent in the Right and had much to gain and learn by working together.

The beginnings of this relationship between the immigrant community organized by PCUN, Oregon's farmworker union, and rural allies who would soon form ROP began on a march opposing Measure 9 that led through the heart of Oregon's Willamette Valley. Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United), is Oregon's union of farmworkers, nursery, and reforestation workers, and Oregon's largest Latino/a organization. During the March for Love and Justice, PCUN opened the doors of their union hall to the marchers unlike many local white churches that refused to allow the LGBT community and their allies a place to stay the night. And unlike some of the caretakers of the churches that did allow the marchers to stay the night, rather than quickly turning over the keys and limiting their association with the marchers, the farm worker leaders at PCUN sat down with the marchers and engaged in a deep conversation about alliance building. PCUN leaders questioned why this was the first time that the communities were coming together. They noted that there were struggles in the immigrant community that had been going on for some time. They also shared that they were working to deal with homophobia in their own community as some Latino/a leaders questioned the validity of building such an alliance. They called on the marchers to remember PCUN's hospitality and support in their time of need by reciprocating with support of their own when called on by PCUN to

stand up as allies to the immigrant community. Both PCUN leaders and the future leaders of ROP affirmed that real solidarity is a two-way street.

When ROP was formed, that call from PCUN for solidarity become part of the philosophy and core commitment of the organization. That is why the initial anti-racism trainings were held with each of ROP's local member groups. When PCUN and other immigrant groups organized themselves into an immigrant-rights coalition called CAUSA—which translates from Spanish as "cause," "campaign," or "movement"—ROP was a founding ally member. Over the last fifteen years, ROP has continued to serve on the board of CAUSA and lead immigrant solidarity efforts around the state.

So from the beginning ROP grew from the base up with two seemingly contradictory realities in mind: the deep moral and philosophical or even spiritual justice-for-justice's-sake kind of level that called on rural communities to organize ourselves and resist the Right regardless of whether or not we could win; and the second, which was the strategic necessity to organize white, increasingly impoverished, rural Oregonians as allies for racial, economic, and gender justice given the demographics and power balance in our state. In terms of leadership this has meant that from the beginning ROP was primarily white, led by women, queer folks, and straight allies, many of whom were working-class.

My story is also a rural one, but it begins a decade earlier in the Blue Ridge Mountains that make up the eastern edge of the Appalachian Mountains. I grew up in the '80s in rural Botetourt County, just outside of Roanoke, VA. Growing up in a close knit Christian family that became Southern Baptist when I was thirteen, the only kind of activism I saw was the kind that condemned choice, evolution, and queer and trans people, and stood up "proud to be an American" when the first war on Iraq began. I began to learn how my vision was limited and current and past struggles were hidden from my view. When I looked around my hometown I did see the kind of community that knew and cared for one another. And I began to run into the contradictions that anyone who takes the message of truly loving your neighbor to heart will find when they look around them at the inequities and injustices that surround us. I also wanted to run about as far away as I could from my hometown, which in my case led me to Cameroon, West Africa. From the time that I got my first yard sale book on Europe, I had always been drawn to cultures that were different than my own. I was

probably ten when I realized that there was more to the world than the United States and Europe and I quickly became interested in any place outside the United States that I could read about in *National Geographic*. I went to college an hour and a half away from home and quickly switched my major from International Affairs to Anthropology. My senior-year thesis was on Nigerian women and international feminism and development. I wanted to be in the Peace Corps but without having to be a mini-ambassador for the U.S. government. I found the perfect opportunity when a friend in the Peace Corps hooked me up with an organization in Cameroon who worked with women farmers.

I was well on the road to the life I had dreamed of: traveling around the world, helping people to improve their lives, changing the world one village at a time. It was an amazing time and I can't express enough gratitude to the Cameroonians who welcomed me into their lives and homes. But what I learned more than anything was that these folks didn't need me—at least not in the way that I thought that they would or the way that most international agencies suppose that they are needed. The local people of Cameroon, just like local people around the world, don't need well meaning Americans or Europeans to help them to organize their own communities. They know how to do that better than we ever will. What they need is our help to organize the communities that we come from. All of the villages and towns that I worked with in Cameroon creating locals plans for sustainable logging, hunting, and non-timber forest product harvesting were left with the stark reality that decisions about what would happen to the forests around them were ultimately being decided in board rooms and intergovernmental meetings in France, Belgium, Malaysia, and the United States.

It was this realization that if I truly loved these communities and cultures outside of the United States, the best way that I could support them was to work in the United States for the cause of global justice starting in my own backyard, my own community, my own culture. As a young, white American I could do a lot more to dismantle capitalism and white supremacy by accessing other white Americans, my neighbors, friends, and family to change the way that our systems work and thus help change the way that our systems impact the rest of the world. Having this truth hinted at in my heart and mind, the closest I could get to my own backyard while

staying in the United States was still three thousand miles away in Portland, Oregon.

In Portland, I learned what community organizing was. I was given language to name the injustice that I saw around me and developed an analysis to ground my social justice work in. I began to think in terms of power—who's got it, who doesn't, and how you build it in terms of people not profit. I found that the work I most wanted to do and seemed best suited for was—and is—base building and ally development. In Portland this was creating organizational infrastructure, events, and campaigns that would bring together mostly white, middle-class, home-owning neighborhood activists with people of color, immigrant communities, homeless people, and low-income tenants. After three years, I had the opportunity to leave Portland and join the Rural Organizing Project. I was truly thrilled to have the chance to do organizing in communities that felt like a return to my rural roots.

What is your strategy and how do you see that strategy fitting into a Left movement building approach?

Amy: ROP is working to build a rural movement for justice in Oregon. This is our piece of the larger global justice movement pie. We see this as the simple but difficult work of base building coupled with analysis building, or political education and action. The structure that we use is local, autonomous human dignity groups who are committed to our shared values of democracy and justice. We generally organize on a county level but also take into account state and federal legislative districts for the purpose of larger campaigns. The work of these local groups is to build the infrastructure and do the ongoing work of growing their base locally that in turn is a part of ROP's statewide base. These local groups are really the face of ROP. Members of a local group will identify primarily with their local group and secondarily as a member group of ROP. The kind of campaigns and issues that these local groups work on is up to them. Sometimes they work collectively with other human dignity groups through ROP; often they work on their own with a local focus and rely on ROP for backup and support as needed.

ROP has a staff of three white women who are the behind-the-scenes support for the local leadership of these sixty-plus groups. We keep a lean budget that allows us to focus on organizing instead of fundraising and rely extensively on volunteer support people for everything from database and webpage support to donated cars and yard work. ROP's office is a small house in rural Scappoose, Oregon, that was converted into an office through volunteer labor and is now owned by the organization so we don't have to pay a monthly bill for rent or mortgage. We are funded through member donations and independent foundations. ROP's role is to support local leadership of these groups to develop and maintain the capacity to take action with a goal of establishing rural progressive infrastructure for the long haul and secondly to mobilize our base and bring the collective power of ROP to bear on issues that are important to advancing true democracy. The core capacity areas that ROP supports local human dignity groups in building are: 1) a named leadership team (whether you call it a steering committee, a board, or a spokescouncil, the important thing is that membership is clear); 2) communication systems (database, e-mail, etc.); and 3) an organizing and action plan (goals for taking action and growing your base).

ROP now works with more than sixty local groups in nearly every one of Oregon's thirty-six counties. While building local progressive infrastructure is our core mission, we have a variety of issues that we focus on: tax fairness, funding for human needs, stopping the war(s), queer rights, protection of civil liberties, and immigrant rights. Of all of these, immigration is the most threatening as a wedge issue not only in the communities that we work in around the state, but within the progressive groups that we work with.

We unite this work under a shared vision of true democracy and human dignity for all. This is the kind of language that we use to mean collective liberation, the notion that we are not free until all of us are free, that all oppression, and therefore liberation, is connected. We put this vision into practice by organizing a base that brings together targets of oppression (queers, immigrants, communities of color) and beneficiaries of privilege (white folks, straight folks, allies) to work on one another's issues by challenging one another to stand up for the kind of democracy and kind of community that we want to live in.

The current focus of our collective action is united under the framework of "dismantling the war at home and abroad." When we talk about the war at home in addition to the destruction of public services, unfair taxation, and funding for the war above human needs, we are particularly focused on lifting up and fighting against the targeting of immigrants as scapegoats in the "war on terror." To this end, we have developed an immigrant-rights program that has as its goal mobilizing rural communities to take action for immigrant rights. This work includes responding as allies to action alerts from the immigrant community, whether that is lobbying for or against proposed legislation, writing letters to the editor, monitoring and responding to anti-immigrant activities, or literally standing in solidarity with the immigrant community at rallies and community forums. The internal work of our immigrant-rights program is supporting predominantly white, rural people in developing and taking action from a progressive understanding of immigrant rights and global justice and their personal role in countering racism and the anti-immigrant movement. We believe that ROP's membership and geographic base as predominantly white, middle- and working-class, rural people in a predominantly white state is a target for the anti-immigrant movement. In this way, we have positioned ourselves as a resistance movement.

Yes, a lot of racism and oppression does go unchecked and unchallenged in rural communities, as in most communities, but this is not natural or necessary. In fact, as in all communities, there are many hidden stories of struggles and resistance in rural communities against racism and oppression. Meanwhile the systems of white supremacy, homophobia, and patriarchy are hard at work here. The Right knows that and is working to use that to its advantage and build its base. As rural social justice organizers, we believe that our communities, and white people broadly, are more firmly rooted in a sense of fairness and justice than in hate, if we can tap into that. And fundamentally, white people have a stake in creating fairness and justice for all people. That is what we are trying to mobilize and build on within our own base.

Our success hinges on our ability to "inoculate" our base against the anti-immigrant movement and create leaders who are able to carry this "inoculation" forward in their local communities. We want to create leaders with the skills, analysis, and relationships to advance immigrant ally work in

a significant and meaningful way. But at a minimum, we want to stop rural Oregonians from becoming anti-immigrant activists or supporters. As one of our allies at the Northwest Workers Justice Project says, we are working with folks who are likely to either become Minutemen or freedom riders. So this is where the notion of really working with people where they are at hits home. Many of us, myself included, want to be the "perfect" ally, a good white person. What we have to understand is that being the best ally that you can be usually means working with other white folks. And the truth is that just like us, most white folks still have a lot of learning and growing to do when it comes to their own internalized white supremacy. But if we are going to end white supremacy, I believe that we have to do a lot more work within our white communities to dismantle the systems that have us all by the neck.

As far as how this fits within a "Left movement building approach," ROP is first of all concerned with building up our progressive base in rural and small town Oregon. The assumption that is at work here is that we all need to be organizing and building our movement where we live if we are to build a strong movement for justice in the United States and in the world. ROP does this by supporting infrastructure and base building through local human dignity groups in every corner of rural Oregon that we conceptualize as movement centers or hubs. Ideally these local groups are always growing and engaging more people as centers of a growing progressive movement. This is the infrastructure piece that relates to the skill and practice of literally building a movement, growing your local database, using sign-in sheets, creating an active welcome wagon that brings new people into your organization.

The other strategic way that ROP relates to building a movement in the United States is by focusing on rural white folks. Again, there are statistical reasons for why we should organize rural white folks. White people make up 75 percent of the U.S. population. White folks also overwhelmingly control the wealth and power in the United States and the world. The Right has targeted rural white communities as their base and we must counter that. In rural Oregon, the reach of the infrastructure in the immigrant community that primarily exists via CAUSA is limited. CAUSA sees ROP, as do other allied organizations with a more urban focus, like Basic Rights Oregon, the

statewide LGBT organization in Oregon, as a vital link in their efforts for statewide legislative and electoral wins.

As a predominantly white rural organization, building this truly inclusive movement means that we seek out relationships with all kinds of allies in our shared movement building work. We actively support reproductive justice, criminal justice reform through the Partnership for Safety and Justice, economic and racial justice with our urban allies at Oregon Action, Sisters in Action for Power, a youth and women of color led organization in Portland, and UNETE, a farmworker organizing project that we fiscally sponsor. While our membership includes many people who experience privilege as white people, they also experience oppression as poor and working-class people, as queer and trans people, as women, as youth, and as people with disabilities. Our solidarity with organizations who prioritize work on issues that affect these groups of people acknowledges the experience of our members as whole people who experience both privilege and oppression and gives us the chance to put into action our belief that all oppression and all liberation is connected. We organize with white people in a way that attempts to model what our movement should look like. One of our board members talks about how at ROP she doesn't have to choose between her identities. She doesn't have to only be a queer woman or a peace activist or an ally to the immigrant community or a pick-up-truck-driving Okie transplant to rural Oregon. She can be all of these things. ROP's vision of movement building holds up Martin Luther King Jr.'s notion of "beloved community" as a place where all people are valued and their human dignity is respected and where there is fundamentally just and democratic power-sharing.

What are the methodologies you use to work with white people? What has been successful and what has not?

Amy: ROP is above all about organizing and building a movement in small town and rural Oregon. Whatever we are doing we are always asking how can this grow our contacts, engage new people, build for the long haul. We don't go anywhere without passing around a sign-in sheet or asking people for their contact information. When it comes to our anti-racism work, the same thing is true. We want to grow a large base of anti-racist allies who will

take action when called upon and incorporate this vision and awareness into their own organizing.

Growing our base means that we have to start where people are. Really. Of course you want your leadership to get it at the core—to be committed anti-racists. But if we are truly committed to building a base, we have to make room for the base. And that means making space for learning, having the patience and compassion that it takes to move with people, often move really slowly with people. It is a real balance. On the one hand, you need to take this time with people if they are going to stay with you. And on the other, you want your work to be true to your vision and not always waiting for everyone to get to the point where they agree with every part of your analysis or vision.

I think that ROP has walked that line well, but not without tension at times. We believe that building a democratic rural Oregon is not just about involving white, straight, middle-class folks. We have held as one of our core tenets that our struggles and our liberation are connected. We were multi-issue before that was cool. We have always understood that the strength of our democracy rests on the quality of life and respect for the human dignity of the most vulnerable, the most oppressed, the targeted members of our communities: queers, immigrants, poor folks, people of color, youth, elders, disabled people. When we started out fighting Measure 9, we had a strong base of queer folks and allies. Soon after that, when we started working on immigrant rights, we lost some of these folks, and continue to face challenges and resistance from within our base, but we have also gained more members who are allies and members of the farm worker and immigrant-rights community. When we took pro-choice and tax fairness positions, the same thing happened. We lost folks who had been with us for more than a decade when we prioritized our organizing on stopping the Iraq war. We also gained more than a dozen new member groups.

So in building our analysis through multi-issue work, we have lost some single-issue folks and we have seen some of these folks stay with us but essentially stand aside when it is "not their issue," but what we have seen much more of is that when you can link together one another's concerns and experiences into a framework that makes sense and rings true for one group of people, they are willing to see those connections and bring them into their work. We seek out ways to connect our communities concerns with an

anti-racist analysis and vision. We also try to create community that includes support and a sense of identity with ROP and with anti-racist and anti-oppression action. We take the time to build relationships and trust between ROP and local members. If someone has months, years, or even a decade of history with ROP, it's a little easier for them to take the next step, to take a risk knowing that you and the rest of the ROP community have got their back. But don't get the wrong impression. This is difficult and active work. It doesn't happen without struggle. But it is often in the struggle that we learn and grow the most. It is absolutely worth it.

There is always a tension in community organizing between the organizer, particularly if you are talking about a paid organizer, and the community. This tension often grows the more removed the organizer is from the community. Particularly around election time, urban or out-of-state organizers will "parachute" in without any real knowledge and often a lack of respect for the local community. This is why at ROP, when our base becomes involved in electoral organizing, we encourage them to take ownership of whatever campaign work they do and to see this as an opportunity for longer-term base building. ROP's model relies on local leadership to head up their local human dignity groups. We want all of our members to see themselves as organizers and we offer trainings and support that are intended to encourage local leaders to develop those skills. ROP staff is seen as skilled behind-the-scenes support for this leadership and as slightly removed friends who can offer statewide or national perspective on issues, advise on campaigns and organizing challenges, and provide skills training and support to local group members. As staff, we don't see ourselves as the local experts and we have immense respect for the knowledge and experience local communities members have by virtue of living day in and out in a community that we are only guests in. But as staff we also recognize that we do have the privilege and benefit of forty-plus hours a week that we are paid to think about organizing, stay updated on current issues, and learn from the experiences of communities around the state.

Collectively, the three of us have been organizing for more than forty years. Our members pay us to work for them and they expect us to be excellent organizers. We are accountable to them, but they expect us to also be leaders who have something useful to offer them when they are struggling with a challenge and who will stay firmly rooted in ROP's

organizational values of human dignity and democracy that have always included a commitment to racial justice and anti-oppression. This dynamic means that there can be tension. Staff does challenge our members to be better organizers and to be stronger anti-racist allies, and there is resistance at times. There is always resistance to change, fear of change, of appearing inexperienced, of doing something new, of challenging power. ROP staff see our role to encourage members to work through that fear and resistance, offer an analysis and framework that allows members to see how the struggle for anti-oppression is the same struggle that they are engaged in as rural human dignity activists, and share skills, tools, and opportunities to turn that analysis into action.

Since ROP's beginning, we have used Living Room Conversations as a tool to bring contentious issues literally into someone's living room with the intent of gathering community input, presenting outside observations and a framework, and then discussing how those observations match up or not with the wisdom of the local community. These conversations have also served to break isolation; being progressive in a rural community in the age of Fox News and online organizing can feel especially lonely. There is no substitute for face-to-face personal contact when you are trying to change culture, not just policy, particularly in rural communities, and these Living Room Conversations are an important first step. When it comes to building our base of anti-racist white folks who are committed to countering the anti-immigrant movement in rural Oregon, we have used Living Room Conversations over the past two years to dialogue with more than four hundred people in twenty different communities. We open by sharing our analysis of the anti-immigrant movement in Oregon alongside a framework for talking about immigration that emphasizes human dignity and human rights, democracy, and global justice. Then we use the bulk of the time to talk about what folks are noticing in their own communities and what they think of the information that we have just shared. We believe that this method of popular education allows the wisdom and reflections of the community to lead the group towards action that is grounded in the realities of their community and allows ROP to act more as a facilitator and convener which in turn leaves room for local leadership and direction to emerge. At the close of the conversation we suggest options for ways to keep the conversation going and ask anyone who is interested to sign up to be a

member of ROP's Immigration Fairness Network (IFN) and their local Rapid Response Team (RRT).

From an organizing perspective, these Living Room Conversations serve at least two purposes. The first is to inoculate everyone in the room against the anti-immigrant movement. The second is to identify leaders who will be part of the IFN and members of their RRT. While we want everyone to be an active leader in the struggle for racial justice, we know that is not going to happen immediately. Think of our work as concentric circles. The first circle is ROP board members and staff. The second circle is the leadership of local groups. The third circle is the membership of local groups. The final circle is the broader community that our local groups operate in. When we have a Living Room Conversation, we are essentially taking a slice of this pie with representation from each of these circles. While we would love to have everyone join as a member of the IFN, at a minimum we want everyone in the room to not join the Minutemen. By talking through the white supremacist vision that the anti-immigrant attempts to hide and debunking anti-immigrant myths, we hope that most folks in the room won't fall for these arguments. By sharing the impacts of global economic policies like NAFTA on people in Mexico and the United States and affirming that white folks can choose to welcome their immigrant neighbors and appreciate their contributions and suggesting active ways to organize to make that happen, we hope that some of the people in the room will take that work up. Part of what is most effective about Living Room Conversations is that they are conversations. While the leader of the conversation will share information for the group to reflect on, we truly do allow it to be a conversation where people can put their thoughts out there and have time to talk through them. We find this to be more effective than talking "at" someone, trying to convince them they should feel a certain way. This style allows people to come to conclusions on their own that are grounded in justice and human dignity and creates more ownership and commitment to a cause.

Through these Living Room Conversation and other activities, anyone who has expressed an interest in fighting the anti-immigrant movement or supporting immigrants is added to the IFN. The IFN is the basic level that allows us to know who to go to when we want to connect with the local community around immigration issues, whether that is to check in about anti-immigrant organizing, alert folks to an anti-immigrant protest that we

want to monitor or counter-protest or provide solidarity to the immigrant community, encourage local pro-immigrant letters to the editor, collect postcards for legislation, or offer other resources relating to immigrant solidarity. The members of the IFN are also the first group that we will go to when we are encouraging local leadership on immigration issues, whether that is leading Living Room Conversations of their own, becoming part of a speakers network to oppose anti-immigrant ballot measures, building direct relationships with the local immigrant community, or leading local campaigns to advance immigrant solidarity.

Rapid Response Teams are local groups who have proactively identified themselves as immigrant allies and are organized and ready to respond when needed. We realized the need for these teams in the wake of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in Portland in June of 2007. ICE is the federal government's immigration enforcement agency that falls under the Department of Homeland Security. Also known as *la migra,* ICE was formerly called Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). When the Portland raid happened, it wasn't enough for ROP to have a list of who in the local community was an ally; local communities needed this information themselves so that they could respond immediately to a threat, whether it be an ICE raid or a nasty anti-immigrant letter to the editor. Within a week of the Portland ICE raids, ROP had established eight RRTs in the areas most threatened by ICE activity. Some of these teams are already well organized, trained in Know Your Rights in a Raid and ICE monitoring information thanks to the quick work of American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Jefferson Center, Western States Center, and others, and are in dialogue with the local immigrant community, elected officials, and employers. Other groups are still building their team. In addition to responding to ICE raids, RRT members work to deal with other immigration crises in their communities. In order to continually build our base and grow our movement, RRTs are also working to educate their communities and bring in more supporters for immigrant rights and fairness. RRTs have organized rallies and letter-writing campaigns following a hate crime and are currently leading a campaign to defeat a local anti-immigrant ordinance.

There is a real balance between education and action at ROP. You will rarely see us doing one without the other. There are a couple of reasons for

that. One is that we believe that people stay engaged when they are not just doing education, but having the chance to take action. And vice versa, people are more likely to commit to actions when they understand why they are doing something. Secondly, since we are about building a base of people, we believe that action is what allows us to reach and engage new people. Talking without taking action just won't do it. This isn't to say that we don't take time for reflection. We encourage spaces for reflection and strategy, but the conclusion is always planning next steps that include action and base building. The third reason that we combine education and action is that we feel a real urgency about our work. We aren't waiting until we have the "perfect" analysis or until everyone we work with is fully on the same page, committed to the "right" anti-racist principles, and fluent in the "correct" anti-racist language. While we take responsibility for supporting people to move in that direction and act in ways that are accountable to immigrant communities and grounded in good anti-racist principles, we don't believe that our communities, including the immigrants and people of color who live in them, have the luxury to wait until all white folks get it. And if we are going to have a base, not just a few people, who are active in the struggle for anti-racism, we need to take action while we are continually creating spaces for reflection and education. We believe and have seen that through action and experience, learning and analysis are developed.

The path for many of our leaders in our immigrant solidarity work begins with an individual interest or expression of support. This might be writing a letter to the editor. It might just be responding with interest to a ROP e-mail that talks about immigration issues. It might even be something that is not a particularly useful or strongly anti-racist action; the point is that this person is willing to take action. From this point, we try and move that person into taking collective action. This could be by joining IFN or their RRT and participating in ROP immigrant solidarity, like writing letters to the editor opposing REAL ID or helping out with security at May Day Immigrant Rights Marches. This is also the time that we are starting to be in relationship with the person and support their learning. Our hope here is that through these experiences and opportunities for trainings and discussions, we are providing tools and a framework that helps the individual to develop an anti-racist identity and a stronger understanding of racism, privilege, and antioppression practices.

If you are interested in developing an anti-racist base of white folks, you need to support interest in and inclination towards anti-racist work in your base. Find ways to involve local leaders in creating political education pieces that will speak to their community. That sounds obvious, but I think it is harder than it sounds. As an organizer, you will have to challenge yourself to stay open and make room for the leadership of new and perhaps less experienced folks, rather than judge and shut the door behind you. We are afraid of being the "bad" anti-racist ally and that can lead us to abandon the people whose leadership we need to support. We are a lot more valuable to communities of color as organizers working with white people than being the "perfect" ally who doesn't get our hands dirty by working with all the other racist white folks out there. Of course you are going to make mistakes, but that will be how you know that you are taking risks to change the world. Don't let fear or guilt stop you. Those are tools of white supremacy that want to keep us white folks immobilized.

What key challenges have you faced in your organizing and how have you worked to overcome them? What helped you address those challenges and what lessons do you draw from those experiences?

Amy: ROP has been engaged in immigrant ally work since our beginning in the early '90s. We have had many successes along the way, including defeating a guestworker proposal in the late '90s, participating in the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, organizing the Walk for Truth, Justice, and Community with CAUSA, Oregon's stateside immigrant-rights coalition, in 2005, and stalling REAL ID implementation. And we should celebrate these successes. Meanwhile there are core challenges that continue.

Rural communities hear the rhetoric of the Right and in many cases it goes unchallenged. In May 2007, two Latino men in rural Clackamas County were attacked by a mob of twenty to thirty young white men shouting racist slurs and throwing rocks the size of grapefruits. The men were injured and the car that they were attempting to escape in was damaged, but the grand jury declined to label this as a hate crime. While this incident has not been linked to an organized white supremacist group, this kind of violence indicates the tension and climate of racism in rural Oregon. In June 2007, Oregon was home to a huge ICE raid that has detained 128

people. In October 2007, white supremacists associated with the Hammerskin Nation, a neo-Nazi organization, attempted to hold a national gathering in Oregon; fortunately it was shut down by a local coalition of anti-racist organizers. Meanwhile Congress's debates of immigration policy seem to get worse and more compromised with each failed attempt.

Anti-immigrant groups in Oregon have emerged and strengthened over the past several years, namely Oregonians for Immigration Reform out of McMinnville and the Coos County Citizens Caucus, a small group from Coos Bay that has been associated with the former Oregon Chapter of the Minutemen, also an apparently small group. More challenging than these overt anti-immigrant efforts is anti-immigrant sentiments from progressives. "Progressive" talk radio hosts like Air America's Thom Hartmann give permission and support for local leaders to oppose legalization on the flawed logic that immigrant labor undermines workers rather than seeing the possibility for workers globally to unite against the corporations that conquer and divide. Local peace movement leaders can clearly see the immorality in an unjust war and are willing to engage in civil disobedience, but can get hung up on the idea that undocumented immigrants are bad because they are breaking the law when their families' and communities' survival depend on it.

In 2005, ROP and CAUSA partnered to create the Walk for Truth, Justice, and Community, a weeklong fifty-mile march from Salem, the capital of Oregon, to Portland, Oregon's largest city. The Walk brought together more than 2,500 people over the course of the week who took their shift on Oregon's back roads to lift up the message that rural Oregon demands funding for human needs, not war, and respect for civil rights and civil liberties at home and abroad, namely immigrant rights and queer rights. In many ways, the Walk was a beautiful creation of what movement and solidarity can look like in the flesh. Over the week on the road, the partnership between rural white folks and immigrants and farm workers brought these groups into real working relationships with one another in a way that would not have been easy to do elsewhere because so many parts of the state are so white and there are limited opportunities for exposure or relationship building with people of color. But what we also ran into by bringing these two communities together was that some of the white peace

folks complained about the immigrant-rights focus. "I thought this was a peace march," was the complaint by a small but vocal minority.

That is often what we run into with anti-racist organizing with white folks. There is resistance, a desire to wait to move what is considered a contentious or "complicated" issue, or the claim that this is not my issue. So we are faced with a choice. Do we simply write these folks off? Do we challenge them in a self-righteous way that blames them for not getting it—and then more often than not means that they are going to get defensive and not get it? Or is there a way that we can challenge and support them at the same time to see their issues as connected? At ROP we believe that when white folks can see their liberation and the creation of the just world that they are yearning for as inherently bound up together with the liberation of people of color, immigrants, other poor people, women, queer and trans folks, youth, elders, and other people who are struggling under the same interlocking systems of oppression, that is where the real movement building can start.

In this case, we realized that the peace community could be a good ally in the struggle for immigrant rights and that we were well positioned given our connections and commitment to ending the war in Iraq to be the ones to help develop them as allies. So we started putting things into a "War at Home and Abroad" Framework that linked the common systems and inequalities in power that have created the global war on "terror," the war in Iraq, and subsequent erosion of civil liberties, breakdown of the safety net, and targeting of immigrant communities. We started using this language in our communications with members. We made it the theme of our annual membership gathering and opened the day with a panel that brought together peace, immigrant rights, and labor leaders to define what connections they see between the war at home and war abroad. We got this analysis up on our website. We framed our legislative platform in this language, including our opposition to REAL ID. We wrote articles for peace publications. We sought out and referenced examples of immigrant-rights struggles that would speak to the peace community, such as the overrepresentation of people of color as well as rural youth in the war and among the dead in Iraq, the attempt by the U.S. government to create a backdoor draft that offers citizenship to immigrants in exchange for military service, how it is the same corporations that are profiteering from the war in

Iraq and benefiting from the militarization of the border, the rise of "homeland security," and detention of immigrants, and how scapegoating and targeting immigrants in the name of the "war on terror" through divisive anti-immigrant legislation and ordinances that prey on fear, racism, and scarcity of resources prevents blame from being placed where it belongs —on the corporations and governments that seek to keep workers vulnerable and unorganized.

A more internal challenge has been to keep our work accountable to organizations of color. Both ROP and CAUSA recognize that we need one another to work successfully in Oregon. To stay coordinated and accountable, ROP serves on CAUSA's board and acts as a lead ally on CAUSA campaigns. We also seek out advice and involve CAUSA leadership on ROP campaigns. Once a year we bring our leadership together for some intentional overlap time. And while we believe that there is a lot of internal work that should be done predominantly in a white-to-white way to allow for real honesty and racism to arise, be challenged and discussed, we also highly value opportunities to bring together ROP's base and immigrant communities for joint collaborations led by people of color and immigrants.

There are still a lot of challenges, though. When you are focused on action with less experienced white allies the way that we are, when most of our base does not have ongoing relationships with people of color, when there are few areas in the state that have an organized immigrant presence, and when you are talking about ROP's more than sixty local autonomous groups, there are plenty of examples of times that we have messed up and things have not gone in a storybook kind of way. The important thing, I believe, is that we try and learn from our mistakes and keep on trying to do the work in the best way that we can.

One of our challenges is our choice to remain a white ally organization given the changing demographics in rural Oregon. Since our allies at CAUSA have limited infrastructure, they are not able to work in every part of the state with a growing Latino/a population. Often these are areas that ROP does have a presence, but as a white staff of three, we are trained to organize white allies against the anti-immigrant movement, but we are not very skilled or suited to organize with the Latino/a community. We are attempting to bridge these gaps and establish relationships with the local Latino/a community, but as the demographics of rural Oregon continue to

shift, we have to continue to question the logic of our role as a white ally organization and as the only statewide rural progressive organization, especially when the capacity to organize the Latino/a community in several parts of rural Oregon does not yet exist among Latino/a organizations.

A second challenge has been to create relationships with the Native communities in rural Oregon. Though the Native community makes up 1 percent of the state's population, in some rural counties, they make up as much as 30 percent of the local population. Beyond the demographics, the history of genocide and continued oppression and poverty that Native communities face demand more solidarity on the part of white allies. ROP has made some headway in building relationships with Native community leaders through our youth organizing effort to connect white rural youth with Native youth, but we have a long way to go. There is a wide gulf that we have yet to bridge between most reservations and the surrounding communities resulting from deeply rooted racism.

Given the demographics of rural Oregon, it is challenging but necessary that we do our anti-racist organizing in a way that is accountable to communities of color. But at the same time, we want to be sensitive to tokenizing individual people of color by asking them to speak on behalf of their entire race or ethnic group. In some rural communities, there may not actually be an established community of color; there may only be individuals of color. If there are organizations of color, they may be religious in nature, like the Catholic Church with a Spanish-language service, or they may be more business-oriented, like the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and these groups and their members may or may not share our anti-oppression values. Nevertheless we need to seek out relationships with organizations of color and talk about the racial justice work that we are doing and be open and responsive to critiques, suggestions, and requests.

At ROP we encourage people to seek out organizations and individuals who are members of or who work with the Latino/a community and get to know one another by introducing themselves and finding out what issues and projects are important to the immigrant community. Start by listening and showing up, not only asking people of color to join your group or support your issue. Be sensitive to tokenizing, but don't let that stop you from reaching out. If there are no organizations of color in your community, find organizations of color in your state or region. Somewhere there is a

group that can be a resource for you! This may not mean that they have time or interest to sit down and talk with you about your organizing, but it is likely that they will have a website or newsletter or e-mail list where you can learn more about the issues and concerns and history and culture of the community broadly. In addition to educating yourself about the communities of color in or near your own, seek out opportunities to learn what it means to be a white ally. There are also trainings and resources that you can take part in with other white anti-racists to learn more about how to understand white privilege and organize against white supremacy.

This is not a perfect science, even in urban communities or communities that have large communities of color. People of color and the organizations that they create are diverse. There are different politics and different visions of social change. They will have different ideas of what white allies ought to do and how they should support communities of color. So, depending on your perspective, the good news, or bad news, for white folks is that you aren't off the hook; you will have to keep thinking critically no matter where you live and what your community looks like.

Don't let the complexity of white anti-racist organizing stop you. Build intentional relationships with organizations of color and invite dialogue with these groups so that you can be accountable and responsive to the priorities of communities of color. But don't be deterred if these relationships take time or don't manifest as strongly as you would like. Ultimately this organizing with white folks thing is our work as white people. It is our responsibility. Don't wait around wondering when an organization of color is going to decide to prioritize organizing white folks and call you up and tell you what to do. This is not to say that those organizations won't value this work. It is just that they have plenty of work to do themselves, like surviving white supremacy and the systems of oppression working to destroy communities of color. And it is not to say that you won't hear from these groups when you mess up, which you hopefully will. This might even be the opportunity to really deepen a relationship with an organization or individual of color that has not been possible before. But the most important thing that you can do is to do something. Take action. It is better to mess up in the pursuit of justice than to be perfect at doing nothing! This is risky work. Which leads back to the notion of working with folks where they are at. It is good to have spaces where you and your circle who share politics can

support and encourage one another, read and discuss, scheme and plot, but if we are truly about building a movement we need to be able to organize outside this comfort zone. For many of us this means doing a little personal work to develop communication skills and confidence, patience and humility. The best advice I can offer about this is to try and cultivate what your love for justice can look like when you apply it to yourself and to the people around you. Even the goofy, awkward white folks that remind you just a little too much of yourself. I believe that this love in action truly can transform the world.

Like many young people who grew up rural, I left as soon as I could and never thought I would look back. What I have come to realize is that for me this "battle for the hearts and minds" of white folks is largely a rural struggle. There are many logical reasons for this, not the least of which is that the Right realizes this, but for me there is also a deeper, more personal logic. Rural folk are my people, my grandparents, the friends and family who made me what I am and whose love inspires and sustains me to believe in transformation and hope for justice. I want to do right by them. And I want them to do right by the world.

BUILDING LIBERATORY POWER

Anti-Racist Queer Organizing in the South

An Interview with Louisville Kentucky's Fairness Campaign

How can radicals with a vision of revolutionary social change play leading roles in popular struggles? How can we effectively use campaigns for reforms and electoral politics as part of a larger strategy to build liberatory grassroots power? How can we make anti-racist, feminist, collective liberation politics and practice the mainstream of a movement rather than the fringe? What would it look like if the leading LGBT organization in a major city was rooted in an anti-racist multi-issue Left agenda? How can we build powerful multiracial alliances with large numbers of white people committed to anti-racism? In Louisville, the Fairness Campaign has important insights and lessons to all of these questions. To learn more, I interviewed one of the key founders and leaders of the Fairness Campaign, Carla Wallace.

What were the conditions that the Fairness Campaign emerged from, what has been the purpose of Fairness and what is the organization's history? Can you also talk about your own political development as it relates to Fairness?

In Louisville, in the late 1980s, one of the most common conversations among those of us challenging the daily expressions of injustice was how to build a movement powerful enough for real change.

Conditions were anything but favorable regionally, or nationally. Intervention abroad, social support rollbacks, escalating incarceration rates and the growing disenfranchisement of those locked out of society's benefits

were increasingly the order of the day. Past struggles had resulted in critical victories in the areas of civil rights, and in worker's rights, but the system in which oppression thrived was still intact. If we were going to transform a system based on the profit of a few at the expense of the many, a system that used war and racism to maintain itself, and a system that cloaked itself in the charade of democracy in name only, then we would have to build something broad and deep enough to challenge the enormity of wealth and power aligned against us.

I had been thinking about the question of power for a long time. I was born into a family which had too much, in a world where so may had too little. The unbalanced nature of our system was obvious to me from an early age because my mother, in particular, and my father once educated by her, were constantly pointing this out to me. When she was young, my mother had talked to her Dutch classmates about the importance of international solidarity in the Spanish Civil War, and my working-class grandparents were active in the Dutch Communist Party's anti-Nazi resistance. When I asked my Dutch Oma if she was afraid when the Nazi soldiers searched her small apartment for the anti-Nazi resisters and she had hidden under the dining room table floorboards, she said, "Child, that is just what you do."

My first demonstration was as a three-year-old, accompanying my father to protest Louisville's segregated Brown Theatre, and my first act of civil disobedience came in the second grade when I refused to stand for the national anthem. How could I say the words "with liberty and justice for all" as long as we were bombing other children I considered my sisters and brothers in Vietnam? Beginning what became an enormous filing system some years later, I was obsessed about building the case for why our system needed changing, and collecting the stories of those who tried. Examples of resistance were especially hope inspiring; the young people protesting at the lunch counters, the students at Kent State, indigenous resisters at Wounded Knee, Ho Chi Minh, Angela Davis, Bernice Reagan, Victor Jara, Che, Frederick Douglass, and of course Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X.

Years later, after over a decade of campus and community organizing, it was a growing understanding of the way oppressive power maintained itself that led me to focus on anti-racism as a way to collectively build the kind of movement needed to transform our country and its relationship with the world.

For those of us who are white, as serious and well guided as we thought our work had been, as much as we took our inspiration from the earth moving examples of struggles past, our work at this time was not adding up to what we had hoped for. When we were really honest with ourselves and each other, we had to admit that our change efforts were not building the kind of movement necessary for systemic change. Unless we could convince significant numbers of white people that a system that privileged them relative to people of color was also using them to maintain something that only really worked for the top few, we would continue to be thwarted in our efforts to build a multiracial movement capable of winning this country for its vast majority.

The place in Louisville where strategizing for real change was part of the air we breathed was the Carl Braden Memorial Center. The Center has been the site of decades of people of color-led and multiracial efforts for social justice in Louisville and beyond. It carries the legacy of untold meetings, action planning, people of color-led efforts like the Black Panthers and cross-race collaborations of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Southern Conference Educational Fund, draft resistance, anti-war, and economic justice efforts. The core of folks who gathered there in the mid-'80s, Black and white, had been part of, or had learned history from the Black liberation struggles of the 1950s and '60s. I first found my way there as a teen during the struggle to free the Wilmington 10 in the '70s. When I returned to Louisville almost a decade later ready to "get involved in the movement," it was the first place white anti-racist journalist and activist Anne Braden told me to go.

There I met Black activist Bob Cunningham who shared his insights about the revolution's focus on human needs in Cuba and encouraged those of us who are white to reach out to white working people. Black women like Jackie Shaw taught us through her renditions of Sweet Honey in the Rock's "Ella's Song," about intersectionality, and Mattie Jones told us to put our bodies where our words were, on picket lines and demonstrations from Louisville to Forsythe County, Georgia, to challenge the Klan. Black labor organizer Roosevelt Roberts spoke to us of the Louisville Black Workers Collective and Bette Payne, a Head Start teacher with one son shot to death, and another in prison, reminded us not to underestimate the power of young people. These activists and others working with the Kentucky

Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression became my teachers, my mentors, and ultimately my justice family. One of the conversations we had a lot was about the importance of getting more white people to see common ground in the fight for racial justice.

On both sides of the color line, we felt that unless we could convince more white people to defy racism and join together with people of color to embrace a mutual interest in building a world in which all people matter, we would be continually held back and divided. Unless we could grow the ranks of white people who would challenge racism, our change efforts would be thwarted by divisions along racial lines.

When we talked about change efforts, we were not thinking of the patchwork of bandaids that passes for liberal policy making these days. We believed that a system serving the few at the expense of the many was inherently immoral and unworkable. We believed Martin Luther King's teachings that a nation that spent more on war than on the care of its own people had to be transformed.

Without question, the most influential white person for those of us in the youth of our activism was Anne Braden. I first met Anne when I was a child. She and her husband Carl had been charged with sedition in the early 1950s for helping Charlotte and Andrew Wade, a Black family, buy a house in Louisville's white southwest section. Shadowed by the anti-communist hysteria of the times, the court proceedings included the presentation of Carl and Anne's "subversive" books, (Marx and Lenin, but also Tolstoy and Turgenev—whatever, as Anne would say later, had a Russian-sounding name) and dug into the long history of support for workers' rights Carl had been engaged in long before he met Anne. Openly willing to identify as socialist and opposed to the popular purges of communists in progressive groups at that time, Carl spent nine months in prison before national pressure helped free him. He and Anne dedicated the rest of their lives to the struggle for racial and economic justice.

I remember Anne and Carl telling my parents about their hopes for a new society that could emerge from a commitment to peace and racial justice. Though only ten or so, I could hear Anne's passion and her urgency. I later associated that passionate urgency with the joy she said she found in joining what she called, "The Other America," the resisters. I knew I wanted my home to be there too.

When I moved back to Louisville years later, after college in Massachusetts and community organizing jobs with Mass Fair Share and ACORN, Anne would tell me, and any of the rest of us young activists who would listen, that if we wanted to change our country, and its relationship with the rest of the world, we had to fight racism. She said that the issue of race, and what she said should be called white supremacy in America, was like a foundation stone in the wall of the system. The wall would start to crumble if you shifted that foundation stone.

Transformative change, while unfinished, had happened when people of color made it happen. One had only to learn of the repression of those struggles in the '70s, and the gains made in the '80s by those in power using claims of reverse racism to convince too many white people that people of color are the reason for our own hardships, to begin to understand why the issue of race had to be central to our work.

Whether it was police abuse, voting rights, economic justice, or war, a core of us, Black, Brown, and white, came to believe that building an anti-racist majority was going to be key to making progress on any issue that any of us cared about. That meant we had to get more white people to understand our stake in fighting white supremacy too.

Louisville's political and, most importantly, corporate elite have never been asleep when it comes to protecting their interests. All over the country, and especially in the South and in the increasingly Black base urban centers like Chicago, Detroit, and elsewhere, the "threat" of growing Black electoral power was something they were determined to thwart. Here in Louisville, there was no way they were going to let Louisville elect a Black progressive to higher authority, with all the potential in challenges to Louisville's oppressive corporate power they feared that would entail. And they had a plan to make sure this would not happen. That plan was city-county merger. The merger of the city and much more white, affluent, and economically conservative suburban base, would dilute Black voting power, and working-class (especially union) power across the board. It was seen as needed to ensure that Louisville remained "competitive" economically.

The first failed attempt to pass city-county merger was in the 1950s, and since then, mergers were succeeding in locals around the country. In 1982 and again in 1983, the city's elite succeeded twice in getting a measure before the voters that would merge Louisville and Jefferson County, only to see

efforts fail due to the organizing power of Louisville's Black community. To prevent merger, working-class whites, unions, and Louisville's Black community joined to constitute a powerful anti-merger coalition coordinated by PACTen, a political electoral entity of African Americans. Afraid of higher taxes under merger and reflecting their own racism, the fear of being "burdened" with what they considered the unfavorable demographics of the city, the suburbs also voted to defeat the ballot measure.

The city was 35 percent Black and predominantly working-class. With merger defeated, the city ground was ripe for organizing around social justice from a framework that put race at the core and could join those of us most able to benefit from change.

Among the first efforts were the Jesse Jackson presidential campaign of 1984, and the 1985 mayoral candidacy of Darryl Owens, a Black elected official who became the first mayoral candidate to ever meet with the LGBT community and pledge to support equality for all. While Owens did not win, the campaign provided, among other things, a place for white anti-racists to provide a visible support in an atmosphere that attempted to portray the Black candidate as only able to represent Black people, while the white candidate was put forth as representing everyone.

In 1984 and again in 1988, a progressive multiracial coalition delivered electoral victories for Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign in the Louisville Democratic Primaries. For Louisville's Black community, these were seen as important examples of the potential for growing Black political power. Embracing unions, economic justice, women's equality, and "gay rights," the agenda was extremely progressive for its political time. But most importantly, working together we were able to use the electoral battle to build relationships across lines of race, mobilize through grassroots initiative, and engage significant numbers of white people to consider an agenda that carried racial justice at its center, as the "winning agenda for all of us." I remember Jackson's meeting with coalmining families in the packed gymnasium in Hazard, in Kentucky's Appalachian region. Generations of people with histories of coal, poverty, and resistance came together in that space. To thunderous applause, he said, "When the light goes out in the mine, no one knows or cares what color you are. We can find common ground." I interviewed young white people there that day, and a common

response was, “I know he is Black, but he understands what we are going through.”

For those of us looking at how to engage more white people, especially working-class white people, the Jackson Campaigns showed us that this was not only possible with an anti-racist agenda, but in fact, it was a way to build relationships that would end up lasting into the decades to come. (In 2000 the electorate would finally deliver the merger victory the local corporate elite of both parties longed for, once again steepening the ever uphill battle that is building a power of the locked out capable of forcing real change. Our continuing efforts are set against that backdrop.)

Coming out of the electoral experiences of building multiracial, cross-class coalitions, in 1986 a group of progressive lesbians and gay men founded the March for Justice, an annual march and rally for lesbian and gay equality. Besides introducing street action in the struggle for queer equality, the march provided visible support for the efforts of Greater Louisville Human Rights Campaign, a legislative effort to get city hall to consider legislation prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation.

A small multiracial group of us were studying theories of change together in the late ‘80s, and we knew that while study was important, its purpose was to inform our changemaking efforts. We believed capitalism was inherently unjust. We saw that the system maintained itself through war and racism. We thought that if we were going to make some contribution to changing it then building a movement against war and racism had to be central to our efforts.

Unlike much of the gay organizing around the country, March for Justice and GLHRC integrated a commitment to challenge both war and racism. When we marched the ten plus long blocks from Central Park to city hall, our chanting included “Racism, Sexism, We Say No, Homophobia’s Got to Go,” “Money for AIDS, Not for War,” and “Gay and Proud! Say It Loud!” After several years in which our crowd topped off in the hundreds, conversations began about launching an all out push for anti-discrimination legislation. For those of us coming out of the trenches of Louisville’s anti-racism work, this new Fairness Campaign would be multilayered, broad-based, and prioritize coalition building with Louisville’s Black civil rights community.

In 1991, a small core of anti-racist queers, mostly white, and mostly lesbian, reached out to our white gay brothers in Louisville's "pride" community to launch the Fairness Campaign for LGBT equality in Louisville. The overall goal was to win a piece of legislation: basic anti-discrimination protections in jobs, housing, and public accommodations for LGBT people. At that point in Louisville, while there was case after case of discrimination based on sexual orientation or identity, LGBT people did not have a shred of legal protection based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The mid-'80s had been marked by several attacks on the homes of Black families in southwest Jefferson County bordering the city boundaries. The largely Black Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, in which I was among the white board members, led the multiracial organizing response. In 1990, responding to the pressure of this organizing, one of the Black aldermen introduced Hate Crimes legislation, and included sexual orientation in the proposed law. A furious homophobic backlash was unleashed spearheaded by forces who had until then been focused on rolling back abortion rights.

In 1991, based on the relationships Fairness leaders had built in past work, rather than negotiating sexual orientation out of the law in a deal to pass it, Black elected officials, with the support of the civil rights community and the newly launched Fairness Campaign, obtained the votes for its passage. On the same night legislation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, to be known as the Fairness Amendment, was introduced by the council's only Black woman.

The Fairness Campaign struggle can be seen as a civic exercise to expand LGBT rights. But for those of us interested in building power for transformation, it is a story about how a long-term campaign for something can be built in a way that keeps large numbers of people engaged over time, gets white people to identify our self-interest in fighting racism, brings more white people into anti-racist work, and allows us to build political power in support of an anti-racist economic justice agenda.

While the name Fairness Campaign might indicate a short-term effort, and for many, the hope was that it would be, it became clear fairly quickly that we were in for a long term, uphill battle. As one who believed in the power of struggle to reach, teach, and build something, my commitment

was that if it was going to be a long fight, we would not only win critical human rights expansion for LGBT people, but wage the battle in a way that expanded the ranks of racial justice and helped people see what organizing from a broad justice framework could do to change our own lives and shift power for locked-out communities. The name Fairness Campaign connoted action, and resonated in ways people who never consider themselves political could embrace.

In the formative period leading up to the founding of the Fairness Campaign, when we looked at a lot of the gay organizing around the country, we saw that it was dominated by both white privilege and class privilege. In cities like Dallas, Atlanta, Cincinnati, and even San Francisco, while there were people of color and multiracial queer formations doing very important intersectional work, the dominant LGBT groups were largely focused on organizing around "gay rights" in a single-issue, white gay male dominated format. National groups like the Human Rights Campaign only reinforced this problem, encouraging an almost sole emphasis on gay fundraising parties that cultivated donors for HRC's national agenda and contributed little to building a powerful multiracial base that understood the importance of struggles for racial, economic, and gender justice. Even when here and there, white-dominated LGBT groups paid attention to racism, it was often in the form of tokenizing people of color as part of a "diversity" effort. As if having a more diverse board, but still defining gay issues narrowly, was progress. We knew that we wanted and needed our efforts in Louisville to be different from that.

Nationally, with rare exceptions, no one in the LGBT or progressive movements was winning anything anywhere. Under the presidency of Bill Clinton, the national political agenda was framed by war, anti-poor welfare "reform," gays in the military, and the so-called Defense of Marriage Act. Everywhere, the radical right's numbers were growing. They were exploiting homophobia within marginalized communities and racism within gay organizing to advance an agenda that was about racism, war, and cutting taxes for the rich.

In our region, LGBT rights was considered an impossible struggle, even among many of us. But after fifteen years of struggle, in a Southern town, like too many that are often written off by our brothers and sisters on the East and West Coasts, thousands of folks mobilized. Many people totally

new to being "political" lobbied, protested, went door-to-door, and got arrested in civil disobedience actions. In 1999, we finally won one of the most progressive laws of its kind in the country, covering both sexual orientation and gender identity. And we did it in a way that was seen by the broader community as having strengthened social change efforts more broadly, and anti-racism work in particular.

What is your strategy and how do you see that strategy fitting into a larger vision of collective liberation?

If we can get large numbers of people engaged in social change struggle in a way that builds relationships across lines of difference and expands what we see as necessary for our own liberation, then we contribute to movement building that is transformative. Transformative change has to be grounded in the concept of collective liberation. In the Fairness work, we discovered that if we got people in motion together, hearts, bodies, and minds, and with an intersectional vision, we begin to look and love beyond our individual identities to create something bigger together.

The Fairness work would have been marginalized, of narrow impact, and of short duration if our work was not based in the kind of organizing that builds base, grows leadership, allows for a creative range of tactics, defines winning as the journey and not the goal and puts anti-racism central to our mission. While I do not think it would have been possible to win Fairness legislation in Louisville without an intersectional vision, even if it had been possible, such a win in and of itself is not going to change things more deeply—the way we need them to. But if we approach each and every struggle as our part in the larger, long-term effort for fundamental societal transformation, then our work adds up to so much more, today *and* tomorrow.

It is exciting to me that we can take a struggle for a much needed law and wage the battle in ways that provide opportunities for those engaged to learn deeper lessons, become inclusive leaders, recognize that only by building together can we grow power that is freeing rather than oppressive. For those of us in the battles who are white, taking leadership from people of color, and finding our own way to lead while organizing other white people,

results in some of the most profound life-changing liberation we can dream of.

Any effort to build a broad base depends on the possibility that people will get active if we reach out to them about something that matters to them. One of the challenges we faced in the early years of Fairness was that without any legal protection based on sexual orientation or gender identity, LGBT people had every reason to be afraid of "coming out" in general, much less in the midst of a highly televised political campaign for queer equality. In the mid-'80s, during heated hearings to get the local Human Relations Commission to endorse what became known as the Fairness Law, queer people testified about discrimination from behind dressing screens.

In addition, the opposition made sure that LGBT people knew they were not welcome in Louisville. Hate literature and hate speech included threats of physical harm and connected anyone who identified as queer with pedophiles. The Fairness office was vandalized twice, and attacks on LGBT in Louisville were a source of local fear.

To deal with this, it was important to be intentional about creating safe space for people to come forward. While we encouraged people to come out, we respected that most were not ready to do so. Due to this, sometimes creating safe space was as obvious as having a standing rule with the media that if they filmed people who were not ready to be out, they would not be invited back to cover something they really wanted. But creating safe space in the Fairness work also meant addressing racism and sexism within the queer community. We talked a lot about what it meant to build something that included all of us, but more importantly, people got the experience of what it meant to actually do so.

From the beginning, the Fairness work was marked by creativity in terms of tactics. There was lobbying of elected officials, and there were large mobilizations. There were visibility actions where people sat through often boring procedural aldermanic meetings holding signs that read "Another Mother for Fairness" on a Fairness "family" night, to "Another Catholic for Fairness" on "faith" night. There were Fairness activists for whom this weekly vigil became their favorite Fairness activity. Others found their political side in the "Circle of Fairness" action when volunteers held hands to complete a full circle around what for many was this imposing, unfamiliar place called city hall. And then there were the volunteer nights at the

Fairness office where people could meet one another, work on a mailing, make phone calls, interview candidates for office or join in on strategy meetings.

One project that was particularly empowering for people early on was the full-page signature ad that ran in the local paper. Again, for a community that had no legal protections, "coming out" as LGBT or at that time even coming out as an ally, was a big step. There were family discussions, employment conferences, and acts of courage, as over a thousand people made the decision to put their name in the paper. People still go up to the framed list of names that hangs on the Fairness Office wall to point out their name or, more often, the name of a loved one or friend now gone.

Much of the white Left sees legislative and electoral work as "too moderate" and not leading to real change. Many of us would agree that this observation is largely accurate. However, to dismiss these strategies only based on what we have experienced of them, might be a failure of imagination.

The electoral arena is used by those in power to maintain that power. Restrictive voter eligibility laws, including the ban in many states on former felons voting, resistance to same day registration and the focus on voter fraud over voter participation underline the fallacy of characterizing U.S. elections as democratic. Thus, when people who believe in revolution engage elections as opportunities to mobilize at the grassroots level, create cross-issue, multiracial relationships and build power, it can actually produce some radical results. Not radical in terms of who gets elected, but, as in a battle for a piece of legislation, radical in terms of how a community can change, can find its strength, as it fights the fight together.

The Fairness Campaign has used both legislative and electoral work as part of a strategy that was transformative for those involved, transformative for the broader political climate in Louisville and built power that could be leveraged for a broader justice agenda. Elections are familiar to people, and historically, they have been and continue to be, an area of anti-racist struggle for communities of color. Voter mobilization and working for civil rights legislation resonates with a broad sector of the public, especially in the South, and elections have the potential to engage large numbers of people. Getting people in motion is one of the challenges when so many are

disengaged. With both electoral and legislative work, the "campaign" framework, gives people the opportunity to experience working for social change with a concrete goal.

But then, if the work is about "electing the right person because that is how we create a just society" or only about how "passing the right law will change our lives," it will not lead to the kind of change in ourselves that is necessary for societal change to go deeper. We have to create an atmosphere in which, while we are working for the election of a certain progressive, or for a piece of legislation, as important as that is, it is actually *how* we do this that matters more than what comes out on the other end.

In the Fairness electoral work, and in the legislative work, many people were introduced to activism through the opportunities Fairness created to work together across lines of difference; something they had never done before. Even more seasoned social justice veterans had the chance, many for the first time, to combine revolutionary vision with an organizing strategy that actually worked.

Relationships were built and an understanding developed of the intersections of the issues we cared about. We started to care not only about the issue that brought us into the work, but about one another, and the issues that impacted others.

In the pursuit of passage of legal protections that are critical for LGBT people to be protected in our jobs, housing, and public accommodations, we waged the battle in ways that drew large numbers of people into collective action. Many of those people came through Fairness with a new appreciation for the way that all forms of oppression intersect, and why fighting for racial justice, for economic justice, immigrant rights, and women's equality, is part of the agenda for queer liberation, part of being free. When a young Black gay man says that he could be a victim of one more police shooting, do we tell him we will only get engaged if it is his gay self that is targeted? When the young white director of Fairness, literally spins around in the midst of a large group of gay white men, in boas and leather cuffs on Pride Day, telling them why fighting racism is his issue too, isn't it harder for them to dismiss him than they might initially wish? In the Fairness Campaign efforts, figuring out what is effective in helping people understand intersectionality has taken many forms.

What are the ways you work with white people to develop anti-racist consciousness and practice? What has been successful and what has not?

In almost thirty years of peace and justice work, I have come to believe that where we put our bodies is one of the most powerful experiences to change our world personally and politically. In the Fairness work, we make space for this to happen and white people change because of it.

We change standing on a picket line at 7 a.m. day after day next to someone who does not look like us, demanding minority contracts and hiring. We change when, in all our queerness, we join striking United Food and Commercial Workers' union members outside the Fischer Meat Packing Company, flyer a gay bar that's hosting a white comedian in blackface, or struggle with LGBT people about opposing the death penalty or militarization. We change when we keep showing up for someone who may not trust us yet, and who later testifies on behalf of LGBT equality at city hall. And we change when Black, Brown, and white lesbians get arrested protesting police abuse together with a Black minister and a mother whose son was stomped to death by the city jailers.

In 1992, the first time the legislation to expand civil rights for LGBT people failed in a vote by Louisville's city council, Fairness activists were of course angry and sad. But we also emerged from that defeat more clear on one of our initial beliefs: winning Fairness meant building power at the grassroots level. That meant not only broader support for intersectional politics and coalition building, but going directly to the voters, door to door to door.

When Fairness launched Project Fair Vote, a door-to-door campaign to talk to people one by one on their home doorsteps, there were those who did not believe we could actually get people to go door to door. But in the years of work to pass anti-discrimination legislation—and to do it in a way that undermined the resistance to, and even grew the base for anti-racism and economic justice—Fairness volunteers knocked on over a thousand doors throughout Louisville. We talked to people not just about LGBT fairness, but about a living wage and an end to police abuse.

The door-to-door work strengthened the Fairness Campaign relationships with anti-racist struggles and economic justice struggles. Project Fair Vote helped convince resistant elected officials that we had

support among the voters, not just in neighborhoods they assumed to be more pro-gay, but across the city. With support among the voters and the ear of elected officials, Fairness became an ally with more than a good political vision to bring to the table.

I also want to note, addressing the issue of growing power in the social change movement is critical if we are to build what is needed to transform this country. The discussion of power building is loaded among change activists. It is loaded with issue of the impact of white privilege in multiracial movement building, and other examples of how power has been abused in the history of progressive work. But unless we are willing to take on the issue of power building, despite its challenges and past history, we will never change the system in the necessary and fundamental ways it needs changing.

Too often, when a white person becomes an anti-racist ally, we show up to be allies to people of color efforts by ourselves, or maybe with a few of the same activists who always show up. This showing up is critical. But how are we "delivering" what is called for unless we show up with more and more white supporters? This calls for us to organize other white people to show up for racial justice. The elite and their corporate friends have all the money and might on their side. For white anti-racists, if we are to be more effective allies with people of color, part of our responsibility to people of color and multiracial anti-racism efforts is to deliver a solidarity that actually has some clout, that adds leverage to the overall struggle for change.

But Project Fair Vote, a Fairness Campaign effort that lasted for a good part of the many years it took to win the anti-discrimination legislation, proved transformational on other levels as well. When John Q Public opens his door and on his porch is a team that might look like Darnell and Larry—a six-foot-three Black gay Fairness leader and a five-foot-by-three-foot white straight carpenter union guy—talking about queer rights, decent wages, and stopping the killings of young Black men by cops, that person at the door has an experience. Those two volunteers have an experience too—an experience in having each other's back in that moment, and in making the case for our self interest in justice for all.

The Fairness history includes several Dismantling Racism trainings that helped Fairness activists learn about the history of racism permeating U.S. history, its culture, and its economic system. These were important for often newly political Fairness volunteers to understand the Fairness strategy of

connecting with the struggle for racial justice in Louisville. In addition, anti-racism and intersectional vision continues to be part of the orientation for new Fairness leaders, integrated into the electoral, lobbying, and direct action efforts.

The Fairness anti-discrimination legislation win was a very necessary advance of human rights for LGBT people, and an expansion of democracy which benefits the society as a whole. But I think there is way of understanding the Fairness story that matters for movement building more generally, and especially for places like Louisville around this country. The Fairness Campaign would not have been successful, we would not have won this legislation, if it wasn't for a commitment to an inclusive, intersectional vision, and a strategy with anti-racism at its core.

In the ongoing challenge of how we get more white people to see our own liberation, as queer people, as women, as workers, or anti-war activists, environmentalists, as inextricably tied to change-making with a racial justice framework, the Fairness story has some helpful lessons. White people coming into the Fairness work learn that our own self-interest in being treated decently is connected to supporting efforts led by people of color, and to building relationships across lines of difference. The way that white people in Fairness learned that being active in anti-racism work was core to the work for LGBT liberation happened in every day ways, and in ways that marked historic moments. All of this was important to giving us as white people, an investment in anti-racism that goes beyond something that is "tacked on" because it is convenient or even strategic only in a given moment.

When white Fairness volunteers come into the office in Louisville's largely white, mixed-class neighborhood of Clifton, their assignment might include helping with a mailing, but while Black civil rights leader Reverend Louis Coleman was organizing people to picket the construction of the new baseball field, every morning at 7 a.m., you might find yourself "doing Fairness" on the picket line challenging racist hiring and contracting practices. When the Braden Center suffered fire damage in the early '90s, Fairness volunteers responded to the call for help with cleaners and painters. I remember a conversation with one young white lesbian who told me her mother had warned her to "never cross Ninth Street," the unofficial line seen as dividing Louisville's whiter east and blacker west ends. She rode with

other volunteers all the way to the Thirty-Second Street Braden Center. And she went because she wanted to support the Fairness struggle, and was starting to understand that helping out at the Braden Center was part of that struggle.

At Fairness we appreciate that the ways white people become open to a connection with racial justice takes many forms. For some, it is that window, however small and even temporary, that connects with other oppression because of queer oppression. For others it is seeing the struggle against racism as part of "smart strategy" to win LGBT equality. It can come from believing in a "rainbow," with an openness to "diversity" being a first step to going deeper, to understanding the way that being anti-racist means more than treating everyone with respect, that it calls for learning about white privilege and actively challenging white supremacy. And for many, the heart opens because we are working side by side with LGBT people of color, and come to depend on one another, care about one another, see one another as community.

On March 3, 1991, Rodney King was brutally beaten by police. Just over a year later, demonstrations and riots rocked Los Angeles as once again the "justice" system delivered anything but. Protests and police response left more than fifty dead, over four thousand were injured and cost the city over $1 billion. In Louisville, the Fairness Campaign mobilized its activists to join in a cross town march in solidarity with others protesting abuse and calling for an end to police killings of Black men locally, something that had been an ongoing battle for decades.

The white people who marched that day included those who had long been allies in anti-racist struggle. But there were also new people; white LGBT people and LGBT people of color who had come because Fairness leaders mobilized.

There are white LGBT people in Fairness who will say, "As far as I was concerned, being part of the work against racism was part of what it meant to work for LGBT rights." But this was far from the case in too many cities across the country where battles were being fought for LGBT equality. I remember Pam McMichael, currently director of the Highlander Center telling us how when she went to Cincinnati to help gay organizers get ready for the anti-discrimination battle there in the mid-'90s the leadership had no idea of who the leading civil rights activists were in their town. That had not

been seen as important for their strategy. Cincinnati's LGBT community paid for this limited vision in the inability to win equal rights for years to come.

The commitment to being actively anti-racist has been an ongoing process of learning, making mistakes, and growth. In one serious breach of this commitment, the organization failed to respond quickly when several Fairness activists of color were verbally and physically attacked in a local gay owned bar. It took being called out on this for the organization to mobilize as it should have done immediately. When it did, Fairness coordinated a press conference highlighting institutional racism, and leafleted the bar's neighborhood about racism. This was followed by collaborating in a Theatre of the Oppressed event led by activists in the economic justice group, Women in Transition. Finally, community pressure forced the bar owner to shut the bar down. More importantly, Fairness engaged a critical period of self-reflection and the broader white gay community was drawn into the need to look at racism within the gay community itself.

The challenges in the Fairness work around how to deepen an understanding among white people about our interest in dismantling racism, and how the system of white supremacy must be challenged if we are to make progress on any of the issues we care about is ongoing and always will be. It is an ongoing process of engaging people within their interest area (in the case of Fairness LGBT rights) and creating a journey around this that helps people come to realize that we cannot be fully free unless challenging racism is part of the struggle. Helping create and take advantage of situations in which people come to understand the intersections between issues, identities, and the power of a untied front that refuses to leave anyone behind.

A story sticks with me from the white gay man who has for several years organized the annual AIDS Walk. He came to me once to tell me with great disappointment that some white gay men were saying they were no longer funding the AIDS Walk because "It is not our issue anymore." He was concerned. Might there be some race underpinnings in their position? Shortly there after, he joined the Fairness Coordinating Committee and at the recent protest of neo-Nazis, he carried a sign that said, "Another White Gay Man for Racial Justice."

Can you share some more examples of multiracial organizing to advance queer liberation and build the broader movement for liberation?

When the Klan announced plans to hold a rally on the courthouse steps, in the spring of 1997, Louisville's Democratic administration and movement liberals counseled civil rights leaders "not to give them more attention by organizing anything." For grassroots racial justice folks, this was a chance to mobilize people in visible opposition to such an overt expression of racism, and an opportunity to bring people together, not only based on what we oppose, but what we support in a justice for all agenda.

Because Fairness Campaign was seen not only as an ally in struggles against racism, but also, as an organization that could get white people to come out, we were asked to be part of the leadership for what would be called a Unity Rally. Despite pouring rain, and "security check points" set up by police to ensure that we did "not get violent," over a thousand people showed up, including significant numbers of white people. Anne Braden told me after the rally that she saw a lot of new white faces, and that she knew these were the people Fairness was bringing into racial justice work. I still have the phone message she left me, talking about how strategic and necessary she saw the Fairness work being, and that she had been wrong to doubt, as she had when I first spoke to her of what I was going to focus on, that a strategy for winning LGBT rights would engage a broader base of white people in anti-racist work.

Recently, in an effort to build solidarity with migrant people under attack in Arizona, Fairness leaders helped launch People Not Profiles, a multiracial coalition to challenge anti-immigrant attacks. In one action, planned and participated in by Black, Brown, and white people together, the public education piece included those of us who are white taking the lead and telling other whites on busy Louisville streets that they had to "show us their papers." We used this as an entrée to address the injustice of the Arizona law in terms of who is being targeted, and the dangers of such a law coming to Kentucky.

Having experienced questions from some white LGBT folks in Fairness about why immigration was "our" issue, rather than simply plowing forward, Fairness organized a community dialogue, led by queers of color, to help LGBT people understand why we were standing in solidarity with

migrant people, and created a front-page newsletter article making the connections between migrant rights and LGBT rights. Based on the groundwork laid, when Kentucky, shortly thereafter, faced our own version of SB 1070, Fairness members joined people of color-led mobilizations. Together, the activists defeated the hate legislation that had been sailing through the legislature.

Creating political power for a broader progressive agenda has been a critical contribution of the Fairness Campaign in Louisville. What we see happen in Fairness, and between Fairness and other groups, in particular POC-led, and working-class groups, is that relationships develop across lines of difference, relationships that were previously rare or considered impossible. We begin to build power for an inclusive justice agenda and create opportunities to leverage this political clout.

The struggles around police abuse had been going on in Louisville for decades. Led by the Black community, people were marching almost daily in front of police headquarters in protest of young Black men gunned down in city streets by police. While recognizing it as only a partial and imperfect solution, the Black community was leading a struggle to implement a civilian oversight board to monitor cases of police abuse. The Fairness Campaign's role in electing several white progressives to the city council had already increased the clout of any coalition Fairness joined. As part of the Coalition Against Police Abuse, Fairness's largely white base brought considerable leverage to bear on an issue politicians conveniently labeled as a Black only issue. When Fairness Campaign not only signed on but actively participated, it was harder for those resisting justice in police issues to ignore activist demands. Fairness activists played keys roles in pressuring Fairness friendly alder people to agree to meetings led by Black activists about the police abuse, and got these elected officials to help draft and pass the legislation demanded. All this in a tense atmosphere which included a huge crowd of white police officers, their families and the Federation of Police marching in the thousands on city hall in protest of the mayor's firing of the police chief for handing out a medal to an officer who had shot and killed an unarmed Black man.

Likewise, the struggle for a Living Wage gained traction in an atmosphere in which power was building for progressive forces in no small part due to the Fairness gains. Led by the local Jobs with Justice, the efforts

built on the carefully planned electoral activism in which Fairness had consolidated accountability for an inclusive justice agenda with elected officials. The same votes that had brought the Fairness win, and the win on police abuse, were there to pass Louisville's first Living Wage Ordinance protecting city employees and contracts.

Just recently, Fairness was able to play an important role in the appointment of one of the most progressive metro council people ever to join local government. Attica Scott is an activist who has long been one of Fairness's teachers when it came to walking the anti-racist talk. She is a young Black woman, former leader of Kentucky Jobs with Justice, and an assertive voice and organizer for justice on everything from immigration to Fairness to police issues, to environmental racism and school reform. She was chosen by the city council to fill the unexpired term of a representative who had resigned amid scandal. In the days leading up to the vote, too many elected officials with close ties of accountability to Fairness needed to hear that the vote for Scott was a top Fairness priority. The Fairness electoral arm gave Scott an early endorsement, and mobilized its supporters to let council members know where the organization stood.

Following her appointment to the council, Scott had to run for election to keep her seat. The Fairness Campaign's electoral arm activated volunteers and raised funds. Amid overt attacks over her support for LGBT people, Scott stood firm on her support for equality for all. Fairness weighed in with media and mobilized our base. Thanks to the grassroots organizing of Scott and her allies, one of the best friends of justice the city has ever had won her bid for a council seat. Unlike too many politicians who shy away from an agenda of liberation once elected, because of the focus on grassroots organizing with a liberation framework, the political space for Scott to continue to take the hard stands for the locked out has been broadened.

What key challenges have you faced in your organizing and how have you worked to overcome them? What helped you address those challenges and what lessons do you draw from those experiences?

Our efforts to do LGBT work with a broad justice vision, with anti-racism as its core, has come under attack from within the LGBT community locally and nationally, and from white political elites in Louisville.

When we joined a boycott of Kentucky Fried Chicken for its abysmal Black hiring and franchising policies, we were criticized by national gay groups who said, "Wait a minute, KFC has sexual orientation protections in its policies, so you shouldn't be targeting them." KFC itself tried to negotiate separately with the Fairness Campaign to try to fix our grievances with them, and thus divide us from the Black-led community effort. They sent the Fairness Campaign written accusations maligning the Black minister who was coordinating the KFC boycott. Their assumption was that they could "fix" the homophobia (read white, in their minds) and weaken the resistance around the racism (read Black but not LGBT). They discovered not only that our grievances included racism as well, but that we refused to go around the Black leadership by talking to KFC directly at all, much to the consternation, I must add, of the gay press nationally. There were times we lost funding or even received hate mail from some of our gay supporters, in particular, from some white men in the local gay community, including people engaged as Fairness supporters or even leaders. I say "some" because there are white gay men who are part of the Fairness history, its leadership and its base, who have been, or became, staunch supporters of the racial justice commitment of the Campaign. When discomfort, or opposition to the Fairness vision arises, the focus is to see these challenges not as a moment to narrow who is part of the Fairness work, but as an opportunity to broaden the conversation.

The work with white LGBT people about why the Fairness Campaign sees anti-racism as central to our struggle for LGBT rights is woven into the fabric of our practice. One way it comes is in the process of expanding leadership, and when the history and framework of how Fairness does the work is shared with new people stepping up. Unlike the mostly white founding leadership of the Fairness Campaign, the current leadership is multiracial. But when former Fairness leaders are asked to come in and share their stories of the early campaign years, and always, the struggles against racism and the support for racial justice are highlighted. By sharing concrete examples of our ally work with people of color and with anti-racist struggles, white people new to racial justice work, can better understand how the Fairness Campaign came to be the powerful organization it is today.

Those who step up in the Fairness Campaign end up learning how to talk with other white people about racism from a very practical place.

Fairness has been successful at expanding LGBT rights. Fairness has done this with anti-racism at the core. So, if you want to expand LGBT rights, and you want to be successful, you follow the Fairness Campaign lead. It has been particularly enlightening for our volunteers participating in LGBT conferences around the country, to listen to others talk of work in Los Angeles San Francisco, and New York. Inevitably they come back with stories of how they were discounted by leaders from other places (Oh, Kentucky. What could you possibly have to share?) until they began talking of the mobilizations, direct actions, and multiracial movement building that "little" Louisville has been engaged in for years.

In a particularly challenging time around class and race in the LGBT community, the decision on the part of the Fairness electoral arm, Committee for Fairness and Individual Rights (CFAIR), to endorse a longtime straight Black ally and incumbent for reelection rather than the white gay man who had been one of the Fairness Campaign's founders, sparked outrage, especially from white gay men. Fairness leaders of color, in particular transgendered people of color leaders, made the decision that they would take the point on addressing the concerns in an open community forum in the neighborhood most stirred up. In a very tense setting, there were white gay men who actually asked publicly, despite their desire to not appear racist, "What is Fairness doing for white gay men?" The implication was that the Fairness activism on racism, including supporting a longtime straight Black ally for reelection, meant that the concerns of white gay men were being ignored. This moment echoes the reverse discrimination claims of the 1980s. These challenges of race and class privilege within the LGBT community continue to be especially daunting in the statewide work, where the lack of a strong anti-racist commitment expressed itself most recently in the refusal of the statewide coalition, in which Fairness Campaign is a partner, to join in the broad coalition effort against the legislative attacks on immigrants.

Some white men and women in Fairness will tell you that doing the work in this way, or the visibility of lesbian, transgender, and people of color leadership in Fairness does not seem "gay enough," or made them uncomfortable. But some of these same people also stayed on the journey, came to appreciate that what we were building was community that included them too. Many, many LGBT people and allies with privilege support the

Fairness Campaign with its anti-racist agenda because we've been able to build a broad-based effort that wields political power to make concrete changes that impact their lives, and because our work has helped shift the anti-gay atmosphere in Louisville.

White LGBT people and allies in the Fairness Campaign represent a spectrum of people. There are the Catholic Sisters, Ursuline and Loretto, called by conscience to stand with those who are trodden upon. There is the lesbian who patches together a living as a nanny in the homes of others and stands with women trying to get an abortion every Saturday. The sister of a gay brother who tried to commit suicide, and the teacher only newly out after Fairness helped win LGBT protections in the schools. There is the twenty-one-year-old transgender queer who is so shy she has not said a lot yet, and the tattooed minister preaching intersectionality to his LGBT and straight congregation. Sometimes I walk into the Fairness office and I do not know half of the crowd gathering that night to blow up balloons for the Pride Parade. Young and old, Black, Brown and white, eager and ready to help me join in with the tasks at hand.

The role of white LGBT activists using white privilege as leverage in the struggle for LGBT rights from an anti-racism framework was invaluable. In those early days, the support of committed white anti-racists like Pam McMichael, David Lott, Jane Hope, and over the years to come, from Jeff Rodgers, Eric Graninger, Carol Kraemer, Kathleen Campisano, Eleanor Self, Susan Remmers, Lisa Gunterman, and Dismantling Racism co-chair Meg Stern. The current Fairness director Chris Hartman, has been phenomenal in his use of a conscious identification as a privileged white male to move scores of white gay men to consider racial justice. The contribution on the part of these people to making the way Fairness does its work possible cannot be overemphasized.

Maneuvering the land mines of class privilege in this cross-class effort needs to be addressed specifically. While the organization prioritized grassroots fundraising from the beginning, the existence of larger LGBT and ally donors, and people who out of privilege were able to spend huge amounts of time doing Fairness work, certainly helped Fairness have space to take risks and get through hard times. In particular, while I tried to be accountable to the larger collective around my own disproportionate class privilege, the impact of this had challenging aspects even as it afforded

benefits at the same time. How we handled these challenges collectively helped grow Fairness far beyond what some initially assumed was a one-issue lobby effort.

Especially, and over and over, the history of Fairness would read far differently if it were not for the leadership of LGBT and Allies of Color. In the earliest days, Jamilla Muhammad, Diane Moten, and Milton Carpentier, Bob Cunningham and Bette Payne stepped forward in critical and visible roles. Alicia Pedreira bravely endured the spotlight in the most visible case of anti-gay discrimination in the course of the campaign's decades of struggle. Aletha Fields, teacher, poet, mother, minister and Fairness activist, leader and co-coordinator over many of its most difficult years, will always hold a place as one of the most forthright and courageous among Fairness leaders. As someone who went from being a powerful youth leader to a visionary organizational manager of the Campaign, Darnell Johnson played a key role in growing the organization. Raising up what mattered and helping Fairness stay its course, transgendered people of color, Dawn Wilson, Monica Roberts, and Yana Baker were front and center in teaching and preaching internally and to the broader community. They have been joined by an entire new generation of fierce and call-it-like-it-is Fairness leaders like Kaila Story and Keith Brooks as co-coordinators, Tiff Gonzales and Alana Montgomery, and many other LGBT and ally leaders, white, Black, and Brown.

Racism, white privilege, and the way that these express in the work and in the relationships between people are ongoing challenges. We have found it important to not think we can "fix" this and move on, but rather, integrate the work on these issues into how we do the work over the long haul. In particular, because the Fairness Campaign base is largely white, and functions with a multiracial leadership, the context of doing justice work within the broader system of white supremacy that controls this country, places the greatest hardships on the Queers of Color and Allies of Color who have been and are critical to Fairness progress and in particular its transformational impact on individuals and the broader Louisville balance of power for progressive advance.

LGBT white people, even while queer, are still white. And all of us who are white are on a continuing journey to unlearn racism and challenge white privilege in a system that has white supremacy at its core. In particular, the

ways that racism comes out in how we do the work together, which voices are heard, and other core struggles, have been ongoing challenges over the years. For example, while the broader ally and advisory cohorts for the beginnings of the Fairness Campaign included key activists of color, the Fairness leadership core began as an all-white group. While committed to anti-racism, and to engaging the struggle for LGBT rights from that perspective planted the possibility of being a space that queers of color would find "home," this was by no means automatic, nor could it be taken for granted that being allies in the anti-racist struggle meant Fairness did not have to do its own work internally and continuously.

The way Fairness has sought to make the organization a place where queers of color and allies of color could be engaged has taken various forms, from anti-racist trainings, to on-the-picket-line relationship building, to the incorporation of the commitment to anti-racism in the mission statement of the organization (and all the conversations and learnings that went into why it states "anti-racism is central to our work"), to the standing Dismantling Racism Committee that is part of the leadership structure of the Fairness Campaign.

For the past ten years, the Fairness Campaign leadership has been multiracial, and for a period of years, the group coordinating committee was predominantly people of color. Unlike groups that brag "diversity" as the main component of what it means to be a group working for racial justice, however, we continue to believe that the anti-racism commitment must express itself in anti-racist action. Too many organizations look only at composition and not at whether or not their agenda has anti-racism at its core. This results in the worst experiences of tokenism, and the "looking right to get grants" abuses which are all too common in this so-called era of colorblindness.

The work within LGBT community on racism has been particularly important. Fairness took the lead in challenging the packed bar performances of a white gay man in black face and dressed as a woman who made jokes about Black women having too many babies in order to get more welfare. Because of the culture within too much of the white LGBT community that assumes that because we are queer we do not have problems with race, it has been full of challenge and opportunity for Fairness to counter this myth with education and action.

Recently, the Fairness Campaign provided critical leadership in a broader coalition to create a racial justice presence during a regional gathering of neo-Nazis who demonstrated in Kentucky's capitol. Helping to make sure the efforts got media coverage, assisting in transportation, and most importantly, reaching out to white people to participate, Fairness efforts contributed to almost two hundred people showing up to counter neo-Nazi racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and attacks on immigrants.

Fairness leaders have been among the strongest supporters and participants in the newly formed Louisville Showing Up for Racial Justice. The new entity is inspired and informed by the national SURJ network which formed in the wake of the election of the nation's first Black president and the racialized healthcare debate in 2009. SURJ is focused on organizing with other white people to challenge racism and build authentic relationships across lines of race for multiracial movement building.

Initial gatherings of the local group have drawn about forty people, including many new to one another and to the necessity of anti-racism requiring action rather than a state of being. With myself and longtime Fairness leaders Carol Kraemer, Lisa Osanka, David Lott, and others among the LSURJ anchors, and newer Fairness activists like Laura Reece and Meg Stern among its active members, it is a natural and productive collaboration for LSURJ and Fairness to expand the engagement on the part of white people in anti-racist action. For the anti-neo-Nazi mobilization, Fairness produced placards reading, "Another (fill in the blank) Showing Up for Racial Justice" that allowed people to express the intersections of identities they were bringing to the rally on behalf of racial justice. In this year's Pride Parade, the Fairness "float" will be a large contingent of Fairness volunteers in rainbow colors carrying signs that say Fairness Showing Up for Racial Justice, and Fairness Showing Up for Immigrant Rights, as well as Fairness Showing Up for Gay Adoption, Marriage, etc.

Looking at how we do the work, instead of only focusing on some place we are trying to get to, even when it is critical like winning legislative protections, has allowed us to build something that has changed this community, that people across the color lines embrace as a core component of justice power. Understanding that we will forever be a work in progress helps ensure that the work on white privilege and racism are not tacked on, or checked off as one more task to complete, but are rather integral to the

ongoing journey. Together, across the color lines, we try to find the ways to make progress even as we know that journey is never completed.

Danny Glover recently told an audience at Louisville's Center for African American Heritage, "Capitalism is a failed system, inherently unable to meet human needs." He called us to heed the teachings of Detroit civil rights leader Grace Lee Boggs and see that out of the current crisis, this period of uncertainty, comes possibility. My hope is that the Fairness Campaign example can encourage others to just start where ever you are, with whatever and whoever you have, no matter how uphill the conditions, or how numerous the naysayers. It does not mean we act without intention, for we must. It does not mean we act with all the answers, for we do not. But in the uncertainty is the potential to lead in a constant state of openness, to heed the lessons of the past, the potential in this moment and the necessity of building something not alone but together. When Audre Lorde said, "Find your work and do it," she meant each and every one of us.

LEADING WITH OUR VISION

Anti-Racist Organizing in the Economic Justice Upsurge in Wisconsin, the Occupy Movement, and Beyond

An Interview with the Groundwork Collective

When tens of thousands of people occupied the state capitol in Madison, Wisconsin, igniting a non-violent economic justice uprising, the Groundwork Collective was right in the middle of it. A small, Madison-based, white anti-racist organization, Groundwork drew upon eight years of organizing experience, their longstanding relationships in communities of color and white communities, and brought their leadership to one of the most important economic justice fights in the past decade. The two-week-long occupation of the capitol in Wisconsin, helped ignite the Occupy Wall Street movement, which quickly became the largest Left mass protest movement in the United States, in a generation. Groundwork continued to bring their leadership to help unite the insurgent Occupy movement with ongoing economic and racial justice struggles.

The Wisconsin uprising and Occupy revitalized the Left. In doing so, they also give us critically important insights into the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities we face as we work to build powerful movements capable of winning immediate changes and shifting the overall balance of power from deep inequality to vast equality. Popular people's movements have all the contradictions, limitations, beauty, and potential of the people involved in them, while simultaneously facing the existing hierarchies of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy and the brutal and subtle repression of the state and ruling class. The organizers of Groundwork

knew this when they stepped up to help build the Wisconsin uprising and the Occupy movement.

This is an interview about their work in these two powerful moments of mass movement, as well as their previous years of experiences and lessons doing anti-racist organizing and multiracial movement building. It was conducted with Groundwork organizers Cindy Breunig, Z! Haukeness, and Kristen Petroshius, who also gathered feedback from the larger collective for their responses.

Can you share some of the key moments in the organization's history? And in particular, can you speak to important lessons, moments of evolution in the organization's politics, strategy, and practice?

Groundwork (GW) started as a mostly white, multiracial study group reading about racism and racial justice in Wisconsin in 2003. Three of our original study group members had recently moved to Madison from San Francisco and Washington, DC, and had been influenced by the global justice movement, the Challenging White Supremacy (CWS) workshops, Catalyst Project, and the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. A fourth original member of the study group came from St. Louis and brought long-term experience organizing in communities of color. After moving to Madison all of us separately joined a local anti-war group. Following issues of white privilege arising in the group, a call went out for an organizational anti-racism training. Out of this first anti-racism training, the study group was formed.

We spent over a year studying local history and current issues, while intentionally building relationships with local people and organizations engaged in racial justice work to learn what work was happening. At the end of the group's first year, three white members decided to create a nine-week anti-racism workshop for white activists, modeled off CWS. In the process of developing the workshop, we worked closely with a group of mentors of color. We also sought out feedback from a broader multiracial group of people doing anti-racism work locally and nationally.

With a larger core growing out of the first workshop, we began to create an organization. For another year, our main focus continued to be self-education. We also had a growing desire to put our theory of supporting

people of color into practice; several Groundwork members began volunteering with local people of color-led organizations. Finding organizations to support was a challenge, as there are few people of color-led organizations in Madison and even fewer doing community organizing. In practice, our framework became more nuanced. We supported groups that worked on racial justice issues: incarceration, racism in the public schools, and immigrant and refugee rights. These organizations were not always people of color-led, and didn't always fit the traditional view of "organizing." Nonetheless, by showing up to do the work, we deepened our relationships and understanding of the complexities that exist in practice.

Letting go of rigid frameworks was and continues to be an important lesson. We learned that the more urban, coastal models of finding the "radical people of color-led organization" has limitations. In the Midwest, smaller cities, and rural areas, this type of organization may not exist. At the same time, there are always people of color fighting racism. We needed to know that the work may look different and, thus, our work as white people may look different. Building relationships with local people of color engaging against racism was critical in deconstructing how some earlier anti-racist theory had led us to romanticize people of color organizations and oversimplify the complexity of multiracial movement building.

As trust grew between these organizations and GW members, we mobilized the broader GW organization to do support activities. Early examples included providing childcare for a conference to support Black families fighting racism in the public schools, preparing egg rolls with Hmong youth for a Freedom Inc. fundraiser, and making arm badges for a Voces de la Frontera immigrant-rights demonstration. By doing concrete things asked of us as an organization, we began to build relationships *as an organization* to people of color-led organizations. This is important because while individual members of GW may come and go, the organization continues.

After years of following a fairly strict "follow the leadership of people of color" model, relationships have strengthened and grown between GW and organizers of color. As a result, our practice has evolved into a "shared leadership" model—where anti-racist white people are at the same table with people of color to collaborate, share strategy, and make decisions. This is complex, as GW members have found ourselves in various leadership

positions in people of color-led organizations, Generally we hold this complexity by discussing it internally and with people of color with whom we work. There are times we have been invited to hold leadership positions in people of color-led organizations when we have asked, "Do you really want a white person on your board?" or declined a leadership position that was offered to us by people of color.

At the same time, we try to remember that the work needs to be done, regardless of our identities, and so sometimes we provide leadership even when it's not ideal. Many of us have skills to offer, and it's important for us to use and share them while remaining aware of how internalized racism and internalized white superiority can play out in our collaborative work. We try to hold ourselves accountable through this complexity by periodically checking in about such tensions with organizers of color. Yes, we do make mistakes, and we try to recognize and learn from these experiences. Fundamentally, we know that white people's principled anti-racist leadership has been and continues to be an important piece of racial justice movements.

Because part of GW's focus has been to support people of color-led organizations, we've played an important role in helping build relationships between different people of color-led organizations and in building multiracial coalitions. It has also been very important that in these moments we have stepped up, rather than watched opportunities come and go. While it's important to be respectful of how we bring leadership it's nonetheless critical to trust ourselves and bring it. After all, these coalitions have created a Freedom School for youth of color, moved forward statewide immigrant rights, organized housing and land occupations, developed leadership programs for LGBTQ youth of color, and provided leadership in the Wisconsin uprising.

White anti-racist base building has also been central to how we provide principled leadership. Through our relationships with organizations of color and white people doing anti-racist work has grown, we've had increasing requests to do trainings with predominantly white organizations. Our ongoing organizing in Madison has also broadened the base of white folks who are interested in participating in our eight-week fall workshop, which we have offered every other year for the past eight years. This in turn has

broadened our base and allowed us to mobilize a growing base of allies to take action for racial justice.

The relationships we have developed with organizers of color over the years have provided mutual growth and support, and it's essential to recognize this reciprocity. While GW members have invested time and energy to support people of color as core to our work, people of color have also given time and energy to our individual and organizational development. Some of the organizers of color and organizations who have played central roles in supporting, shaping, grounding, and inspiring GW in the past and present include Dianne Riley, James Murrell, Mario Garcia Sierra, Cynthia Lin, Kabzuag Vaj, Monica Adams, Marilyn Miller, Barb Munson, Voces de la Frontera, Freedom Inc., Operation Welcome Home, and Take Back the Land (TBL)-Madison. Without these relationships of mutual support and collaboration, we simply wouldn't be who we are.

Most recently we were in a key position during Wisconsin's uprising, the biggest "movement moment" in Wisconsin since GW began. We had relationships with people of color-led groups who were trying to centralize their leadership and the experiences of low-income communities of color, and we also had relationships with lots of white people—some who had done our anti-racism trainings and many who had no race analysis. Our role in this moment was to organize white people and build bridges between people of color-led groups and predominantly white activists.

GW played a major role in the mass uprising and occupation of the state house in Madison, Wisconsin. Can you talk about what you did during that time, what you were trying to achieve, and what lessons you draw from that experience for the Occupy movement today?

Wisconsin is a place of great beauty and complexity. We are a state long known for progressive traditions, union organizing, democratic values, and a powerful legacy of multiracial alliances and movements for civil rights, native sovereignty, and environmental justice. At the same time, Wisconsin's history is one of stark contradictions of institutionalized racism and oppression. Many of these complex threads came together in the uprising of February 2010. The challenge for GW was and continues to be how to rise to

meet this "movement moment" in a way that builds for a broader vision of racial, economic, and social justice.

In the November 2010 election, as part of the national Tea Party wave, Wisconsin experienced the most dramatic political shift to the right of any state. The Democratic majorities that had been elected with the energy of the 2008 Obama campaign were more than flipped. The Tea Party candidate, Republican Scott Walker, was elected governor, and Republicans took control of the State Senate and Assembly with a supermajority. Wisconsin also lost our most progressive U.S. Senator, Russ Feingold, to millionaire and Tea Party activist Ron Johnson, Governor Walker was heavily supported by the billionaire Koch brothers.

In early February 2011, Governor Walker announced his "budget repair bill" that would eliminate collective bargaining for public employees. He asserted that the state was in crisis, and the repair bill needed to pass within days to fix the budget. Unions, teachers, and students quickly responded to this unprecedented attack on workers' rights. Within days, the state capitol and cities and towns across the state were flooded with protest. Within a week's time, high school students were organizing walk outs around the state, teachers went on strike in at least fifteen school districts, and tens of thousands of public and private sector workers from across Wisconsin mobilized in Madison. Emboldened by the huge wave of public protest, fourteen Democratic state senators fled the state to block the vote on the bill and give more time for its content to come to light. The occupation of the capitol that began with university students, quickly grew to include bus drivers, firefighters, teachers, nurses, youth, childcare workers, and their families. An uprising had begun. The occupation was sustained for over two weeks until the police and the courts shut it down.

The uprising was painted largely as a middle- and working-class white struggle. However, communities of color stood to be the hardest hit, and their involvement in the struggle was significant. The bill not only stripped public workers of collective bargaining rights, but it also included an unprecedented attack on the lifesaving state programs Medicaid and Food Share, a loss of millions of dollars for public transportation, and a restructuring of programs that provided support for people with disabilities to live independently. People of color also made up the ranks of some of the most vulnerable public workers who stood to lose their collective bargaining

rights, including childcare workers and home health workers who had recently won crucial organizing drives in Milwaukee. In addition, the Voter ID legislation was moving forward quickly, which stood to disproportionately disenfranchise people of color. Drafts of an anti-immigrant Arizona copycat bill were also circulated.

People and organizations of color that had been organizing around economic and racial justice showed up early and often. However, they were often invisiblized during the protests, both by the media and within the spontaneous, informal structures of the occupation itself. Under the banner of workers' rights, a "color blind" lens was the default, with limited discussion of racial disparities within the attack on working people. The tensions of privilege and oppression were front and center as police and prison guards were celebrated as new labor allies, without an analysis of the relationship between communities of color and policing and incarceration before or after the uprising. Surrounding all of this was a complex and murky terrain of who held decision-making power within the organizing.

GW members and organizers of color grappled with these tensions. Together we worked to support the creation of space for people of color to feel safe within the uprising, and also to support the centering of their voices and issues. It was crucial to center people of color's leadership so that the visions of democracy and justice of the uprising go beyond the defense of the white middle class to a deeper and broader systemic transformation for all people.

We feel that the uprising and occupation, along with the uprisings in the Middle East have been inspirations for the Occupy movement. GW members have engaged with Occupy both locally and nationally to try to share some of our lessons learned for hopefully deeper transformation. One way we connected with Occupy Madison was through homeless and housing work. When some members of Occupy Madison came to us to ask how to bring more people of color to their work, we encouraged them to expand their frame and practice racial justice.

Since the uprising last spring, the Wisconsin GOP has continued to push a reactionary agenda in the state legislature, unleashing broad attacks on women's rights, tenants' rights, voting rights, formerly incarcerated people's rights, treaty rights, and environmental protections. At the same time, the people of Wisconsin have recalled two Republican Senators, and are

organizing a massive grassroots effort to recall Governor Walker. Beyond the recall we are called to create a vision of justice for our communities. We continue to build from our hearts, passions, and strengths to contribute to long-term people's movements in Wisconsin. Through the strategic alliances of the statewide Wisconsin Immigrant and Refugee Rights Network, the Arizona-style anti-immigrant legislation never saw the light of day. A seemingly impossible effort led by a broad coalition of Native and non-Native groups to stop mining legislation succeeded. Against all odds, victories have been won.

Lessons we learned from our experiences with the uprising for furthering white anti-racist leadership and vision within the current Occupy Movement and beyond:

1. We need to show up for economic justice. It's crucial that white anti-racists show up, engage, and support the coming together of people for economic justice, even and perhaps especially when the majority of those people are white. For some Groundwork members, the experience of seeing our parents, family members, and high school teachers politicized and taking action was very impactful. We showed up because we love people and sought to support their struggle. Many of us also stood to be directly and indirectly impacted by the ramifications of the budget repair bill on our state. We showed up because we knew that if this bill stood to hit white the middle and working classes hard, it would hit people of color even harder. In showing up, we were able to do our part to weave a racial justice lens into this majority-white uprising.
2. We need to work from a place of leadership, not distanced critique. The Wisconsin uprising was a complex picture of both transformative action towards liberation and the perpetuation of privilege and oppression. Instead of distancing ourselves to remain "pure," anti-racist organizers need to engage in these movement moments. We need to give and receive from our hearts, to share our organizing skills and visions of collective liberation while opening ourselves up to learning and transformation. In this process we shape and are shaped, transform and are transformed, teach and are taught crucial lessons along the way.

In Madison, GW members' leadership was expressed through daily work. GW members were involved in the lifeblood of the occupation: helping to create the medic station and child-friendly family spaces within the capitol, participating in new grassroots collaborations like Wisconsin Wave that brought an anti-austerity approach, while also and creating materials and engaging in conversations about how the budget repair bill would impact poor people and communities of color. GW members and organizations of color created banners that spoke to both people of color's presence in the uprising and highlighted the attacks on Medicaid and FoodShare in the budget repair bill. Only through showing up and engaging on a daily basis could GW members provide leadership that supported racial and economic justice.

3. We need to use our leadership to support organizations and individuals of color and amplify a racial justice message. GW's long-term relationships with racial justice organizations were the foundation for connecting to and supporting people of color organizing within the uprising. GW members played multiple roles to support comrades of color including: attempting to create safer spaces within the majority-white crowds and the occupation; greeting buses and marching with immigrant youth and workers organized by Voces de la Frontera; holding signs connecting immigrant and worker rights; and sleeping overnight in the capitol with Freedom Inc. GW also participated with A People's Movement, a multiracial group of community members who created a more intentional space to highlight the issues facing communities of color. With A People's Movement, we organized a Town Hall where thousands of people listened to the impact of the budget repair bill on communities of color. GW members also worked with our networks to get organizers of color access media through interviews and as speakers at rallies.

4. We need to build bridges with ongoing local racial justice organizing. The Wisconsin uprising offered an opportunity for GW members and organizers of color to connect a broader base of people to longer-term campaigns for racial and economic justice. For example, TBL Madison linked a three-month-long housing liberation and eviction defense campaign to the protests at the capitol with the campaign "Whose

house? Our house!" TBL strategically targeted the same bank that was supporting Walker, and invited labor unions and community groups present at the capitol protests to speak at TBL events. This connected predominantly white protesters with the Black community and broadened the frame of the uprising to include housing justice. Another example came when the Wisconsin legislature was debating the full budget bill and Voces de la Frontera organized a civil disobedience action in defense of in-state tuition for undocumented students. Over two days, over one hundred people were arrested at the action, many who hadn't previously been familiar with this struggle. In both cases, the uprising offered the opportunity to engage new people and build potential long-term allies for ongoing racial justice organizing.

5. We need to honor and connect to working- and middle-class white people. A movement moment is an opportunity for people to break through alienation and experience transformation. While working-class white people benefit from white privilege, we/they also experience economic oppression. As white anti-racist organizers (particularly with class privilege), we need to understand this alienation and economic oppression and remember that newly politicized white folks *want* to connect with their humanity.

   Here, the experience of middle-class white people feeling shut out of the political process presented opportunities for politicization. The night when the Senate Republicans changed procedural rules to force a potentially illegal vote on the budget repair bill, hundreds of people outside the capitol were waiting to get in. When news spread through the crowd that the vote had already taken place, people were outraged. A white woman cried, "I thought this was a democracy!" She was shocked that thousands of middle-class people could be so blatantly denied their voice in a process that directly affected their lives. That moment highlighted the questions: As anti-racist organizers, how do we engage with white people who are experiencing an awakening of consciousness, and help to expand this consciousness? How can we respectfully engage to help folks understand that democracy has never existed for people of color and poor people? How do we bring people

together under a broad agenda, while keeping the agenda of poor people and communities of color at the center, so that a true democracy can be created?

6. Finally, we need to engage in a continual process of reflection, action, and evaluation. Through our experiences with the uprising, we realized the possibilities of organizing in white communities and how much work there is to do. Much of the uprising happened so quickly and intensely that we missed opportunities to take action organizationally. Many times the actions we took were as individuals to the best of our abilities. Many times it was overwhelming, hard to find traction, difficult to prioritize, and challenging to find ways to address the dynamics of privilege and oppression within the formal and informal organizing structures. Amid all this, there was incredible inspiration, laughter, learning, new relationships built and old relationships strengthened, new opportunities on a shifting terrain, and new visions cultivated.

What is your vision and strategy and how do you see those fitting into a larger Left/liberation movement building approach?

We want to live in a world that is full of love, beauty, dignity, and justice. We believe that mass-based multiracial movements for justice are what will truly transform society. To get there, a central part of our vision is to dismantle white supremacy and achieve racial justice in the United States and globally. We believe white supremacy is central to upholding all systems of oppression, and view organizing for racial justice as key to collective liberation. We operate from the assumption that racism is rooted in white culture, society, and institutions. So white people have a responsibility to work with other white people to end racism side by side with people of color. The culture of organizing that we practice is based in love. We use a variety of tactics including: community education, base building, legislative and policy change, direct action, campaign development, and organization building.

We consciously work to address all systems of oppression while centering white supremacy. We believe that all movements benefit from and

are responsible for taking an anti-racist approach, including LGBTQ, feminist, environmental, anti-war, and labor movements. While we're inspired by urban and coastal models, we are continually working to create a vision and strategy appropriate for our particular context here in the Midwest.

One way we have connected to broader movement building has been through attending the past two U.S. Social Forums with local people of color grassroots organizations and bringing back these national connections to Madison. Building relationships and collaborating on projects with other white anti-racist organizations across the country has also been important. Most recently, the national white anti-racist network Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) has been a valuable vehicle for us to learn from and contribute to for strengthening national racial and social justice organizing. We have also been part of national racial justice campaigns through working with TBL, supporting the DREAM Act and immigration reform efforts, being involved in the Turning the Tide immigrant-rights campaign, and resisting Arizona's anti-immigrant SB1070.

Within this larger context, our daily work seeks to create internal and external transformation towards healing and justice. Our organizing includes ourselves and our families, and expand out to the organizations, institutions, communities, culture, and systems that we are connected to. Three main goals guide our work: 1) internal education and leadership development; 2) engaging white people for racial justice; and 3) organizing in collaboration with people of color. All of these goals are rooted in accountable relationships with people of color and other white anti-racist organizers.

First, internal education and leadership development. GW is an all-volunteer collective with a core membership of fourteen people. Potential members first participate in our eight-week workshop, and go through a membership process to ensure a shared analysis and foundation. From there, our members engage in ongoing learning, receive support from each other in our ongoing racial justice work, and hold one another accountable to our shared goals. GW members have different levels of capacity and experience, and the development of people at different levels is key to maintaining rich, sustainable efforts. This process is supported in part through our ongoing collective meetings and monthly study group, where

members reflect on our actions, learn together, and find support. We believe that anti-racist praxis involves ongoing learning and our collective process is key to that continued growth.

Critical to the cycle of learning and leadership development is the concrete work people engage in outside of collective meetings. Organizing in collaboration with people of color, facilitating workshops, planning events, encouraging our workplaces to address racism, and having conversations with friends and family are how we deepen our learning and personal growth. Our goal is to support members in this cycle of reflection, action and evaluation. This ongoing process develops more principled and grounded anti-racist leadership.

Second, educating and organizing white people for racial justice. Just as GW seeks to develop our own members through a cycle of education and action, we seek to do the same with other white people. Training and action is fundamental in our work to support transformation on a deep level and to bring in broad numbers of people. We see it as a "both/and" praxis, one piece building upon the other. Our anti-racism training includes our eight-week workshop for white social justice activists, short-term organizational trainings, long-term partnerships with organizations seeking anti-racist transformation, and community events. Our training workshops are based in popular education and seek to engage people's minds, hearts, and bodies. We focus on building analysis for organizing for collective liberation, while holding the deep pain and love that accompany current and historical manifestations of racism and resistance.

Our community education and organizing for racial justice have built a base of anti-racist white people. Our base is around 500 people, which includes the 120 people who have participated in our eight-week workshop, along with the people who we've built relationships with through other workshops, partnerships, and campaigns. We understand our base as a group of people who are in line with and are actively engaged in supporting racial justice. We work to engage the leadership of this broader group wherever possible and continue to connect with others to build our base in size, depth of commitment, and leadership.

Our work with Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice (WNPJ) demonstrates how training and action go hand in hand to engage a broader base around racial justice. For the past five years, we have worked with

WNPJ to help their process of anti-racist transformation, offering trainings to the Board and member organizations in collaboration with trainers of color. Through this process, WNPJ has come to mobilize its statewide network of 178 predominantly white peace and justice organization to take action on important racial justice issues. One notable success was WNPJ's collaboration with the Wisconsin Indian Education Association (WIEA). WNPJ's commitment to anti-racism led to a Native leader of WIEA to join the WNPJ board. WIEA had been working for over fifteen years to pass Race-Based Mascot and Logo legislation that would create a process to eliminate racist American Indian mascots from Wisconsin schools. Through this relationship with WIEA, WNPJ's network mobilized to support the campaign to pass this landmark legislation.

Another way white anti-racists have been mobilized is through "rapid response" to racist incidents in collaboration with the Madison group the Poverty Coalition.

Third, organizing in collaboration with people of color. While as white people we are committed to engaging other white people, our work against racism must be done in relationship with people of color. We see our collaboration with people of color as a key strategy, interwoven with other areas of our work. Our ongoing work includes everything from cooking food, providing transportation, helping fundraise, connecting people to services, organizing rallies, base building, developing campaign strategy, and participating in civil disobedience to build up the racial justice movement in Madison. Sometimes a relationship that begins with a GW member doing volunteer support work evolves into that person taking on a leadership role as a board or staff member. In these roles, individual GW members have been able to mobilize GW and its base to take action for racial justice.

One example is our work with Voces de la Frontera. Over the years, individual GW members have organized in collaboration with Voces de la Frontera as both volunteers and staff. Through these roles they have engaged and mobilized GW and a broader base of white people around immigrant rights. GW members have turned people out for marches and grassroots state lobbying days, coordinated a pro-migrant blog squad for allies to post pro-migrant comments on online articles, and invited key allies to meetings with state and federal representatives. In coordination with WNPJ and Voces, GW members mobilized calls to 178 member organizations to

educate them about state legislation around in-state tuition and drivers cards. As a result, individual WNPJ members took action to call their state legislators, contributing to the successful passage of in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants. GW also collaborated with Voces on a LGBTQ sign-on letter to Congressperson Tammy Baldwin that requested she co-sponsor Rep. Luis Gutierrez's proposed Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR) legislation. Rep. Baldwin hadn't signed on as an original co-sponsor because the bill didn't include a provision for LGBTQ partners. While supporting Rep. Baldwin in her leadership in demanding LGBTQ immigrant equality, our letter requested she support the thousands of queer undocumented immigrants who stood to benefit from the pathway to legalization the legislation would offer. A few weeks later, Rep. Baldwin became a co-sponsor of Rep. Gutierrez's legislation.

What key challenges have you faced in your organizing and how have you worked to overcome them? What helped you address those challenges and what lessons do you draw from those experiences?

Through the years we have had many challenges that we have learned from. Many of the challenges we have faced are connected to some of the reflections above and are part of our everyday work.

First, there is capacity. GW is an all-volunteer collective, and members have various commitments that impact our level of involvement. GW members are parents, students, workers, and organizers with multiple commitments. The amount of work that we wish to do is hard to achieve with our limited time. Our collective structure accommodates people's schedules and allows us to do significant work. With this, it's a balancing act to insure people's different needs are being met regarding how much work they can take on with some wanting to do more and others feeling overcommitted. One issue is how we can support parents as they struggle to stay fully involved with young children. With feedback from parent members, the collective has worked to make meetings accessible by holding them at parents' homes, and also by taking turns watching kids during meetings. Some members have started an anti-racist parenting group to give parents more support and flexibility while staying closely engaged.

We are also looking at how we could expand our capacity by transitioning into having paid staff. In these conversations, we have come up against some critical questions. Up to this point, our main purpose for fundraising has been to generate money for organizations of color, and we have had a difficult time taking the leap to request funding for our work. Other questions include: What role would staff have? How would this alter our collective structure? How can we fundraise accountably? We have started paying ourselves part of the payment for workshops and trainings. Ultimately we think having sustainable jobs is important and we continue to discuss the challenges and benefits that would come with paid staff.

Second, how to do deep transformation work, while also working with broad numbers of people. We have worked hard to facilitate the deep transformation of white people, and to engage with large numbers of people. This is a hard balance. Learning about and feeling the emotions involved in addressing racism isn't an overnight process for white people. Often people's experience with oppression based on class, gender, sexuality, or ability can help them, but anti-racist consciousness is still a transformative process that is ongoing.

We continue to experiment with bringing broader numbers of white people into our work on a regular basis. We have been most successful through working with the organizations of color that we work with, the predominantly white organizations that we partner with and train, and our eight-week workshop.

Third, navigating our individual and organizational identities. Sometimes it's been unclear when a relationship is between an individual GW member and an organization and when it's between GW as an organization and an organization. This is especially confusing if this work becomes someone's paid job. Because there is no magic way to discern this, there has been tension over whether a GW member is doing individual or organizational work. Generally we recognize this as a "both/and." Because so much of GWs approach is to support white folks work for racial justice, much of our individual work is connected to GW while also allowing individual to define their particular role. We hold that tension with love and appreciation for the work.

Fourth, have an intersection of oppression and collective liberation analysis. After years of intentional anti-racist self-education, we were able to

take a more intersectional approach and do education about ableism, transphobia, classism, etc. *with an anti-racism lens.* As white people who weren't used to talking about race, it took us years of studying, acting, and reflecting on racism to be able to take a more intersectional approach. Because of our deepening commitment to intersectional work, over the past few years we have taken small steps towards anti-racist organizing in the predominantly white LGBTQ community.

Fifth, leadership development with white people. To foster the organizing work necessary to build the world we want, we continually develop new anti-racist leadership. Developing leadership is a slow and long-term process. It may take ten times longer to teach someone else to do something that you have done for years. It often takes time for people to accept they're leaders, even if they're already providing leadership. We encourage people to take on as much leadership as they can from the beginning while respecting the experience of people who have already been doing this work. We avoid the paradigm of perfectionism and encourage people to make mistakes, be accountable to them, learn from them, and keep trying.

There is often a hierarchy implied with leadership development. It's important to be real about the fact that people are in different places with different skills and experiences, *and* everyone has something to contribute. For example, when projects come up, people can take leadership on them and work closely with others to learn from one another. Beyond the core, we are always looking for effective ways to give roles to and further engage people in our broader base.

Sixth, accountability with people of color. People of color, like white people, are in an ongoing process of understanding and solidifying their racial identity. Many organizers of color in Madison seek to create people of color spaces, while also strategically building with white folks. It's a struggle to build trust with white folks when trust has been continually broken for centuries. Even after years of relationship building and sometimes friendships, it can still be hard to connect and work together.

We need to be aware of this as we are practicing and developing relationships of mutual accountability. Something that can happen is that we flip the hierarchy of racism. Instead of saying that white people are superior to people of color, both people of color and white people doing racial justice

work position people of color on top and white people below, reinforcing the dehumanization we are trying to address. White people need to challenge internalized white superiority, learn from people of color, and be respectful of the realities of oppression while also striving for horizontal power-sharing. Building personal relationships has been an important piece of this. Although not all of our organizing is rooted in close friendships, central to our work is caring for one another through the difficulty and stress of racism and organizing.

Right now we are in the process of renewing our accountability structure. It has typically been based in informal, ongoing conversations through our working relationships with people of color. Last year we held a Gratitude and Accountability Dinner where we invited organizers of color to come and talk through strategic suggestions for our role and theirs in the broader movement for social justice in Madison. In addition we are looking for more opportunities for people of color we work with to give us feedback.

What are the methodologies you use to build multiracial alliances and collaborative multiracial organizing? What has been successful and what has not?

There's so much to say here, yet it's so simple at the same time. If we're talking about establishing long lasting relationships with people and organizations of color, the overarching methodology is to show up, show up again, show up even if it seems like there's no point, and keep showing up. You can tell yourself why you can't, how you don't have time, or that you don't know the right person but sometimes you just have to show up no matter what. Just show up. Do what you say you're going to do. We're all human and don't always have the best follow-through, but early in a relationship it's especially important to be on your A-game in following through with commitments.

Remember that small tasks go a long way and you may not get a thank you for a long time. One GW member volunteered with Freedom Inc. for two years before she got feedback that people found her presence to be helpful. Before that she really thought her showing up had no impact. This is where having a group of white people to process with was especially helpful —to process emotions and feelings of uselessness, receive thanks and

gratitude, be reminded of the importance of continuing to show up, and learn relevant histories of racism. White people have needs that come up in racial justice work, too, but those needs shouldn't always be processed with or met by people of color.

While we center the importance of white folks collaborating with organizations of color, not all white people doing anti-racism will be in regular direct contact with organizations of color, since this can become a burden for organizations of color. This has become clearer as we've solidified our relationships with organizations of color. We continue to develop new ways to engage white people in racial justice work.

One example of this is our work with Wisconsin White Aspiring Allies (WWAA). For nine months GW worked closely with white domestic violence and sexual assault (DV/SA) advocates to form an organization focused on creating an anti-racist DV/SA movement in Wisconsin. We continue to support their work which parallels the work of two organizations of color and a broader coalition of women of color. As we are supporting base building and campaign work with white people in the DV/SA field, the coalition of women of color are doing base building and organizing in communities of color to build the DV/SA movement. We have supported the relationship building between these groups. We support the model WWAA and the women of color coalition are using to craft campaigns that are parallel but not necessarily combined.

Another lesson learned is to act with love. White people won't ever know what it's like to be a target of racism, but moving our learning from our head to our heart helps us connect on a deeper level with people of color. One of the most powerful lessons we have learned from women of color in particular is, "Don't just listen to me. *Feel me.*" It's still important to use our heads, but often our hearts aren't as fully engaged as they can be. Acknowledge that trust has been broken. Think about our work in the context of history. Know that building these relationships is challenging, takes time, and can be both painful and healing.

One issue we regularly discuss is how to hold the complexity, historical knowledge, and pain when people of color we're supporting act out intersecting forms of oppression—whether it's anti-immigrant rhetoric, transphobia, anti-Black prejudice, or homophobia. We keep in mind the complexity of internalized racism and the intersections of oppression, while

striving to be thoughtful and authentic in addressing issues as they arise. We stay aware that we are all real human beings who lack perfection. For example, people of color aren't more homophobic than white people, and yet and sometimes a person of color is homophobic. In one case while supporting an organization of color, one GW member was (negatively) called a dyke. The women she was building with believed their abusive boyfriends who told them she was a lesbian and so was trying to date them. She found it challenging to deal with this blatant homophobia while taking risks. This pain is real and should be acknowledged. It was important for her to have white people with queer liberation politics to process with and offer support—to have a way to practice healing and self-care. These are issues that we need to deal with and not use them as an excuse to not do the work.

In our multiracial work, we are always learning and growing in relation to racial and classed cultural norms of organizing. Our concepts of time, process, communication, goals, and successes are often challenged as we learn new ways of being. For example in housing organizing with Black communities, a series of BBQs in a park has been more helpful for base building than having short, rigid meetings. This has been important to consider in our role of bridging white people and communities of color.

What are some key lessons learned from your work with white people? What are the methodologies you use to work with white people? What has been successful and what has not?

When we started, we approached our work from rigid frameworks and right/wrong thinking. With white people, this played out in attempts to convert and change people. We took more of a "damage control approach," trying to teach white people how not to make mistakes, and what was the right or wrong behavior. We had our own intense fears and insecurities about making mistakes, and at times were also desperate to find clear rules to guide a very emotional and complex terrain. Even though we started workshops by saying, "I am not an expert," we still felt we had to be to provide ourselves and others with the right answers. This barred us from opening ourselves up to vulnerability and growth, It took years to start to break it down.

This also affected our ability to work successfully with predominantly white organizations. We actively initiated attempts to "come in" to predominantly white organizations to call them out on their racism without a deeper investment in building relationships or the organization's work. At times we didn't search our own hearts to ask if we were willing to commit to the people or the organization. It was as if all of a sudden stopping war was secondary to stopping racism in the anti-war organization. We found ourselves in right/ wrong, either/or thinking rather than seeing the both/and —working against the war *and for* racial justice. This was a huge barrier to doing transformative work.

Needless to say, these attempts at changing people and organizations weren't successful. At the same time, we learned from our experiences. Through putting ourselves out there, making mistakes, and receiving mentoring both locally and nationally, we grew and shifted our approach. By the time we were invited by the WNPJ to help facilitate an anti-racism change process, we were able to enter into a partnership based in developing the potential for the people and organization to flourish. Key to our work with WNPJ has been investing in relationships and in the core mission of the organization for the long term.

GW couldn't have done this work alone. Central to our work with WNPJ was collaborating with Marilyn Miller of the Lutheran Human Relations Association (LHRA). From working with Marilyn, we were pushed to commit to working with WNPJ as a multiracial team of facilitators and create greater inclusivity for people of color within our trainings. In addition with LHRA, we have carried out workshops for WNPJ board members, regional member organizations, and the statewide membership assembly. Again, we were reminded that the work with white people and people of color isn't compartmentalized into separate categories but is absolutely interwoven each step of the way.

Moreover, GW members have sat on the WNPJ board, providing leadership for the internal anti-racist "change team," along with WNPJ work groups for immigrant rights and environmental sustainability. In addition, through the experience of building relationships with people of color and doing work in support of concrete campaigns, many of the white people on the board have shifted their consciousness and deepened their commitments

to racial justice. This has been exemplified by WNPJ playing key roles in mobilizing its own network around racial justice campaigns.

Along with letting go of right/wrong thinking, GW has learned lessons about doing work with white people that not only engages our minds, but also our bodies and emotions. As an organization, we have grown to understand that one of the effects of white supremacy on white people is the disconnection from our own humanity. It's critical to feel in our hearts and our bodies both the reality of pain and the possibility of love and healing. Working with white people from a place of love allows us to engage people in a transformative process. We have come to find strength in modeling our own vulnerability and leading from that place. From love, we can come together and do the daily work of challenging oppression, building right relationships, and becoming more fully human.

FROM A PLACE OF LOVE

Catalyst Project and the Strategy of Collective Liberation Leadership in White Communities

An Interview with Catalyst Project

For more than a decade Catalyst Project has been devoted to developing anti-racist vision, analysis, strategy, and leadership in white progressive and social justice communities with the goal of building powerful and successful multiracial movements working for systemic change. While working in partnership with organizations in communities of color around the country to help achieve this goal, Catalyst's efforts in white communities are guided by the question "How do we organize large numbers of white people to work for the liberation of all people that directly challenges the divide-and-rule strategy of white supremacy?" One of the key responses Catalyst has to this question is that we need to develop anti-racist leadership in white communities rooted in collective liberation politics and guided by strategy based in love. What this looks like in practice is the focus of this interview.

I was a founding member of Catalyst and worked with the organization for eleven years. It was my political home and life's work during those years. The opportunity to do this interview with my comrades, who continue to lead the organization, is a blessing. This interview was conducted in the summer of 2012 with Catalyst collective members Ari Clemenzi, Amie Fishman, Alia Trindle, Becca Tumposky, Clare Bayard, and Molly McClure. Interwoven throughout the interview are different collective members' reflections and experiences, written in the first person.

What is the purpose and work of Catalyst Project?

Catalyst Project is committed to building powerful global grassroots movements rooted in working-class communities and communities of color. We believe that large, vibrant social movements are required to create the systemic changes for economic, gender, racial, social, and environmental justice we need in society. We also believe that in the United States, social movements for justice have been undermined by systemic racism that shapes not only the economic and political institutions of our society, but also the dominant culture and consciousness of white people.

Catalyst works to answer the challenge from organizers of color who, generation after generation, call on white people who are committed to social justice to work with each other and within white communities to uproot racism as part of a larger strategy to build powerful movements for broad systemic change. We believe that the only way to move this country towards equity, justice, health, and cooperative systems is for us to dismantle the systems of divide-and-control that keep the 1 percent calling all the shots. Central to this effort is the abolition of white supremacy.

As white people, we've internalized a lot of myths. Our common interests actually lie with working-class communities of color, not with the 1 percent who are running this world into the ground. On a very deep level, white people are trained to devalue the lives of people of color. This internalized racial superiority expresses itself within social justice organizing, including among those of us who understand ourselves as anti-racist. We focus on anti-racism because we think it's a strategic contribution we can make towards organizing white people into multiracial movements for broad social change. Catalyst believes the change that is needed involves challenging patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy along with all other systems of oppression. Therefore, for us, anti-racism necessarily means working against all forms of domination and working towards collective liberation.

Catalyst's vision and work are based in need and desire. The need is material: racism needs to end for any and all of us to survive. Racism enables economic exploitation that drives down wages and drives up the cost of living, healthcare, education, and the basic needs that more and more people are unable to meet. Racism erodes safety and health for the people of color it targets, and then works on the rest of us. Racism causes

environmental crises that impact communities of color first and worst, and are changing life as we know it for all of us.

Our work is also based on the desire for all of us to live into our full humanity. White supremacy locks up, deports, shoots, and impoverishes millions of people of color. We're losing epic numbers of people and the brilliance, talents, and potential they're not getting to nourish. Racism deforms the humanity of white people, by enlisting our participation in violence and by distorting our ability to understand ourselves and people of color outside of a lens of superiority and inferiority. We long for a different world, where people of color are not on guard in a daily war against their full participation in society. We ache for a world where we aren't conscripted into being foot soldiers for the wars of the 1 percent, at home or abroad.

Our work is primarily focused on developing anti-racist consciousness, leadership, organization, vision, strategy, and culture in white communities. We do this to help build a base of white people who are not only committed to working for justice, but who also understand that anti-racist vision and strategy need to be central in all of our social justice work. We do this work in a variety of ways.

Our political education includes trainings with organizations and groups around the country; facilitating community forums and panels of organizers sharing lessons from their work; mentorship between experienced activists and newer activists; and a four-and-a-half-month anti-racist organizer training program. For us, anti-racist political education opens the door to a larger systemic analysis of power and broad visions of liberation, both of which are severely damaged by white supremacist consciousness. Additionally, our education on anti-racist practice focuses on questions and lessons on movement strategy, multiracial alliance building, organizing methods to build people power, effective leadership, personal and collective accountability, and tools for evaluation. Our goal is not to help raise awareness, although that is important. Our end goal is to help support people to take action to build the movements we need.

Our movement building work includes long-term support for social justice organizations around the country that are integrating anti-racist vision and strategy into their efforts, supporting alliance building between majority-white social justice groups and organizations rooted in communities of color, and direct organizing in struggles we believe have

strong potential for radicalizing large numbers of white people and helping further multiracial movements for social change. We believe in a praxis-based approach. Praxis is the process of developing politics through the application of theory to practice, then drawing out lessons from your experience through evaluation and reflection, and then applying those lessons back to both your theory and practice, so that they are continually evolving. Part of our work is to help create space for social justice activists and organizers to draw out lessons from their practice in order to strengthen their anti-racist work. We do this in part through our political education, and we have a strong focus on one-on-one leadership development and mentoring.

We work short and long term with organizations and institutions. Often we start by offering political education to build common frameworks. We learned early on that the best use of trainings for organizations is to support a core of people who are already working to transform their group. Otherwise, there's a higher risk that one-time trainings will be misused as"Here's my gold star certifying me as anti-racist" or "Oh, we already did that," in a way that actually undercuts the importance of ongoing commitment, education, and action.

Catalyst's political education challenges the idea that racism is a color prejudice to be overcome primarily by controlling individuals' language. We've seen a group's energy for anti-racist transformation disappear into an internally focused effort to use the "right" words in a way that diverts attention away from the core questions of "how are we contributing effectively to efforts to end racism and work for justice?" This also recentralizes white privilege by making the refinement of white people's language the top goal. White people are taught to understand racism just as prejudice, and to overlook the institutional power behind it. We work with groups to deepen their analysis of institutional racism, and to locate ourselves both in history and the current realities of racism. We also focus on learning about histories of resistance coming from communities of color, and exploring ways that majority-white groups can work in accountable and effective ways to be useful partners to organizations based in communities of color. Through our work, we've seen white and majority-white organizations play much more positive roles in social movements when they integrate anti-racist strategies, approaches, and programs.

For example, we have worked for over a decade with Unitarian Universalist (UU) activists, doing anti-racist training for UU groups, offering mentorship and leadership development for young anti-racist organizers moving anti-racist politics within UU churches, and speaking at national UU gatherings. In the spring and summer of 2010, there were huge mobilizations in Arizona against the brutal anti-immigrant legislation SB1070. We sent Catalyst organizers to Phoenix, and they were able to use the relationships we had built over time through our political education work with various UU groups to support the majority-white UU congregations to get active for migrant justice in a big way. We also utilized lessons from years of experience working to build up white people's involvement in supporting immigrant leadership in the Bay and nationally, so that we could offer support to emerging white anti-racist leaders who were getting involved for the first time. Having our political education work grounded in organizing and strongly oriented towards taking collective action for racial justice, instead of just using the "correct" anti-racist language, allowed us to effectively support a huge upsurge in the UU's participation in direct actions against SB1070.

Another recent success of our organizational support work is the victory of the Vermont Workers' Center in resisting racism and maintaining a collective liberation vision in their fight to pass the country's first universal healthcare law. Catalyst began working with the Vermont Workers Center (VWC) in 2008, leading ten days of anti-racism and organizing trainings across the state and later assisting with strategic planning for their Healthcare is a Human Right campaign. We helped them prepare for ways in which racism would be used to undermine their campaign, and when those strategies were employed, VWC was ready. Just before the bill was to pass, conservative legislators amended it to restrict health care access for undocumented people, a small but significant percentage of Vermont's workforce. Progressive legislators said passing it without the restriction was politically impossible. Because of the groundwork we had done together, VWC was quickly able to mobilize their base of mostly white working-class members and supporters along with allies in communities of color to demand health care for all. They put tremendous pressure on the legislature, forcing them to drop the unjust restriction and pass the bill as it was intended.

We also do a lot of emotional support for anti-racist organizers and people in the process of organizational transformation, which we mention because it's often an invisible yet highly important piece of organizing that many people do. Politicized emotional labor, rarely considered "work" at all, can make the difference between someone burning out versus being able to sustain a long, complicated struggle towards change with their vision intact, and is most often done by gender-oppressed people and people of color. Organizing inside communities with high levels of trauma, including post-Katrina New Orleans, and within the military veterans and service members' communities, we've learned deep lessons about the importance of emotional labor in political work.

Catalyst has been deeply influenced by women of color feminism. How has it influenced the way you do anti-racist/collective liberation work in white communities, and the ways you organize to build liberation movement more broadly?

The ideas coming from women of color feminism, including that of Andrea Smith, bell hooks, Cathy Cohen, Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Elizabeth Martínez, Ida B. Wells, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and organizations such as INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, have profoundly shaped Catalyst's politics, vision, and practice. A major lesson we've learned from feminists of color is intersectionality—the idea that all systems of oppression are intertwined and depend on each other, and thus must be addressed in a holistic, interrelated way in theory and practice, in our hearts and in the streets.

For the women of color who first used the term,"intersectionality" meant their refusal to choose between race and gender. For Catalyst, it means addressing our privilege as white people while examining the differences in the way those privileges manifest based on gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, etc. Intersectionality complicates how we understand relationships of power and what's needed to transform them, and helps us understand that we can't organize people around one part of themselves and ask them to check the rest of their lives at the door. When we've used an intersectional approach to organize white people for social justice, we've seen folks access their own motivation and necessity for social change, and seen that translate

into long-haul dedication to movement work. We've been inspired by the kind of fire-in-the-belly passion that develops as people bring more of themselves to the struggle.

If intersectionality is a framework for recognizing the ways in which oppressions are wrapped up together and structure society, then collective liberation is a corresponding framework for looking at how we organize to transform those relations of power. Collective liberation is an approach to organizing that recognizes that our liberation as white people is wrapped up with and dependent on the liberation of communities of color who are living on the front lines of racial and economic oppression.

Like many white anti-racists, we've made mistakes around applying intersectionality to our work; in some cases we organized white people as if they were a homogeneous group, with identical relationships to institutional power and access to resources. We have wanted so urgently for our communities to step up their struggle against racism that at times we've alienated people we were working with by flattening out differences that can actually be sources of power and connection for racial justice work. For example, there was a time when the way we talked about white privilege universalized a middle-class white experience. Working-class organizers within Catalyst Project and in our extended community helped us develop a more class-conscious approach. One benefit of more solid class politics is the ability to organize white working-class people around racial justice in way that connects to their own need for sweeping systemic change, and challenges the divide-and-control tactics of capitalist white supremacy. We can tap into the ways that people within the broad category of "white" experience marginalization, and understand that addressing those experiences of marginalization don't have to be a distraction from addressing racism and other forms of privilege, but can be a way of identifying and acting from our collective stake in liberation.

In February of 2012, Catalyst sent two organizers to Alabama to work on a campaign to repeal the vicious anti-immigrant law HB256. Collective member Alia Trindle writes:

> Using an intersectional approach was crucial to supporting white folks to align and act with racial justice values in Alabama. One day I met with local immigrant leaders and a white working-class pastor

> that the leaders were hoping would mobilize his congregation in support of a repeal of HB256. The pastor supported a repeal of the bill, and when I asked him why, he said, "Well, when I was a poor white boy coming up on free lunch, my school cafeteria was divided by how much students paid for their lunch. On one side, there were almost all the white kids and some Black students. On the other side, there was me, a few other white kids, and the rest of the Black students. That wasn't fair. And this law reminds me of that." Reflecting on his own experiences of class oppression helped the pastor to connect to the oppression of people of color, and he was able to use that sense of connection to deepen his investment in the struggle for racial justice sweeping the state.

We've also learned about the importance of an intersectional approach around gender and sexuality. A huge majority of Catalyst's constituents are white women and queer and transgender people. In trying to move away from the past mistakes of white feminists who pushed for equal access to the power of white men as opposed to organizing for systemic transformation, many of us younger generation white queers and feminists mistakenly internalized the idea that to be "good anti-racists" we shouldn't bring up patriarchy or homophobia. Feminists of color teach us that white supremacy depends on heteropatriarchy and class exploitation to work, and they in turn depend on white supremacy to function. So while white feminists need to be doing our work to make sure that the ways we address patriarchy do not universalize or singularly center our own experiences of marginalization, our anti-racist organizing is only as effective as it is intersectional. Thanks to the support and pushing of allies, we are now in a process of learning how we can integrate disability justice as well into our organization's politics and approach.

Another major lesson we've learned from feminists of color is about how centering the margins, where experiences of oppression overlap, can help us learn about and connect to powerful strategies of resistance that actually have the possibility to transform domination and empire at the roots. This is not a narrow vision of identity politics, but an understanding that the fault-lines of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy are a powerful place to

organize and vision from, and ripe with potential to blow the whole thing apart.

Why is organizing from a place of love so important for Catalyst? How did you come to this understanding?

Traditional models of white anti-racist organizing have a sharp focus on what we are organizing against. Organizing from a place of love means trying to practice and embody what we are organizing towards. Our work is based in a deep love for the liberation of all people, love for the justice movements we are a part of, and love for the legacies of global resistance that inspire our work.

Like many white anti-racist activists in our generation, some Catalyst Project members came into our early anti-racist consciousness and commitment weighed down by a lot of shame and guilt. These feelings made sense in response to the horrifying history and ongoing violence of white supremacy. Overwhelmed by the fear of making mistakes and perpetuating oppressive dynamics, we found it difficult to believe white people could do anything useful to dismantle white supremacy, let alone be a positive force for justice.

Coming from this background, our organization first approached anti-racist work from a fear-driven and damage-control perspective, in which we tried to control our own and other white people's individual behavior without actually tackling the systems and institutions that prop up and perpetuate white supremacy. Acknowledging the pain of white supremacy was crucial, but being immobilized and trying to constrict white people's behavior wasn't a useful, grounded, or effective way to create change. Soon we began to move from a strictly anti-oppression lens to a collective liberation approach, something we read about in the bell hooks piece "Love as the Practice of Freedom." This was a big shift in our thinking and practice about why and how we do this work, and what kind of organizing culture we believe will help promote powerful, accountable racial justice contributions from white communities.

The divide-and-control tactics of the 1 percent keep us at odds with each other, split and damage progressive movements for change, and reinforce systems of power and oppression. Collective liberation challenges divide-

and-control tactics by emphasizing how our fate is bound up with each other. With collective liberation as our goal, we seek to create a society where everyone has access to human rights, food, dignified work, housing, education, and health care. It means that "no one is free when others are oppressed," and it means recognizing that oppression strips all of us of our humanity, keeping us disconnected and alienated from each other and the planet. Within a collective liberation vision, white people work to end racism not *for* or *on behalf of* the interests of people of color, but because our lives and humanity depend on the eradication of racism as well. We do this work in service of a liberated world where the 99 percent don't fight each other for crumbs, where people, including white people, no longer ally ourselves with ruling-class elites who don't have our interests in mind.

Collective liberation is a vision to move towards *and* a practice to help get us there. Love is crucial to a practice of collective liberation because it involves extending ourselves for someone else's growth. As opposed to the traditional concept of solidarity, which can involve a rational calculus of interest between groups of people, love allows for an expansive generosity of spirit that opens the space for mutual transformation.

There has been a tendency within white anti-racist culture to distance ourselves from other white people, to want to be seen as the "good" white people. Organizing from a place of love means practicing humility, and leaning towards rather than away from other white people. It means figuring out how to genuinely connect with everyday folks who we need to organize in order to turn the tide towards justice in this country and globally. We also need to be strategic about where and how we can make the most impact. The right wing is using racism to effectively mobilize white people to work against our own long-term material interests (and often short-term interests as well), and if there isn't a much larger effort to organize white communities for progressive change, the Left will continue to lose ground.

The struggle for racial and economic justice will be a long one, and we believe we need ever-greater numbers of white people to see the necessity and irresistibility of a transformed world. Organizing from a place of love helps us connect to white people's values and shared humanity, and helps us involve them in the struggle for justice in meaningful and strategic ways.

What does organizing from a place of love look like in practice? Can you share examples of how this approach has positively impacted your work?

Collective member Ari Clemenzi shares lessons about organizing from a place of love while working against the anti-immigrant law HB256:

> Catalyst sent two organizers to Alabama in response to a call from immigrant leaders who were seeking support organizing potential white allies in the effort to repeal HB256. Coming from a working-class Boston-area upbringing, there were many cultural barriers to doing anti-racist work in the Deep South, especially on a short-term basis. I didn't have a regional accent or area code, I looked like a queer from a big city, and in general didn't quite fit in. This is where coming from a place of love really helped me to build with people across differences. Instead of approaching folks from a place of defensiveness or skepticism, we were open and honest with people, speaking from our hearts, and grounding our interactions in the belief that they were or could become meaningful participants in the movement for racial and economic justice.
>
> When we found people who were open to taking action, we started doing leadership development with them and making organizing asks. For example, we met a member of a white church and ended up spending a lot of time in one-on-one conversations supporting his politics, his excitement to be doing this work, as well as getting to know him and his family. Some of my favorite moments were supporting the people we met to think about strategic ways to plug into anti-racist work and helping them take concrete actions in line with the campaign. We asked people to mobilize their networks, churches, organizations co-workers, and friends to take action against the anti-immigrant law. Some of the people we met did a lot of outreach in their communities, which helped build the campaign and linked us up with other potential allies.
>
> We led education and mobilizing workshops in churches. We intentionally created spaces where no question was considered stupid, where folks could come without already having the "right answers" to the questions around immigration in Alabama, and where people could learn together and share stories about why they

> were involved in this fight for justice. We addressed internalized white supremacy as it arose, and also used the momentum of participants' personal stories to encourage people to take action. For example, some people expressed a paternalistic orientation to the project of repealing the anti-immigrant law. We made it clear that there were concrete contributions they could make that were in line with the self-determination of people living under the oppression of HB256. We directly addressed the racism but we also knew that we couldn't afford to turn people away who could be valuable allies, so we made space for these folks to be slowly transformed through the process of their actions and involvement in the effort. At the end of the workshop we had each person speak aloud one commitment they were making to stand against this law. Every person in attendance shared that they would participate in the repeal campaign, from putting pressure on their legislators, to writing letters to the editor of their local newspaper in support of racial justice, to organizing a public action.

In practice, organizing from a place of love means working to shift the culture of political spaces to be transformative, where we support each other to grow rather than compete with or tear each other down. We try to promote a culture of respect in our work by proactively orienting towards opportunity, offering constructive critique, and sharing appreciations with the people we struggle alongside. We take a developmental approach to anti-racist organizing, knowing that white people have had different access to opportunities for grappling with the insidious hegemony of racism. We facilitate conversations about the ways that white supremacy culture (of competition, perfectionism, judgment, either/or thinking) manifests in our organizations and work. We acknowledge our bloody history and current reality, our people's complicity and direct participation in that, while simultaneously holding tight to a conviction that our wholeness and humanity is worth fighting for, and racism must end for any of us to have a chance. This balance is what we've found to work best so far in moving people to accountable, effective action for collective liberation.

Organizing from a place of love means knowing where we come from. Part of the process of becoming white for many of our ancestors meant

disconnecting from peoples' histories, cultures, and traditions. We believe that this disconnection is part of what keeps white supremacy in place—many of us don't know how our ancestors participated in oppression but we also don't know the resistance stories either. Learning our histories can help anchor us and connect us to our family of origin, and to other white people.

Collective member Amie Fishman writes:

> Learning my family history has been a deep part of learning to organize from a place of love and compassion, with a fire for justice. It's been an important piece of my political development and work. My family's story is not exceptional—it's much like the stories of many Eastern European Jewish immigrants whose families sent them to the United States to escape persecution, imprisonment, and death. Learning their stories helped me understand that for them, assimilation into whiteness and the promises that came along with it, was about survival—that becoming white meant becoming American, an identity that signified safety and freedom, even with all the complexity and contradiction that identity brought, as it shaped and morphed with them in it. I began to understand how my grandfather could talk on the one hand about not being allowed to go to medical school because of the quotas placed on Jews, while saying in the same breath that he doesn't remember experiencing any discrimination as a Jew in the United States. And as Nazi fascism was on the rise, with this repetition of persecution and scapegoating of Jews, I understand how my family could also buy into the idea of a promised land in Israel, where Jews could finally be safe, and left alone. Understanding my family's history, where they came from and what they experienced, helped me see their complicity in white supremacy and how they benefited from it. But it also helped me to understand the contradictions and complexity within those roles, and how fragile that identity really was, and in many ways continues to be. It helped me to understand the trauma and the pain, the fear of annihilation that Zionism taps into, which compels Jews to believe the world will never be safe for us.

This understanding helped me to have compassion for my family, for others like them, and to want to fight for a world where no one feels the need to occupy another's land in order to have the perception of safety from an inevitable betrayal. For me, organizing as an anti-racist and anti-Zionist Jew is about more than opposing the occupation of Palestine. It's also about transforming what it means to be a Jew, about connecting to that history of persecution and resistance in a way that makes me say that I never want my family or my people, or any people, to be part of that again, neither as oppressed or oppressor. So my political and spiritual work includes working to create a shift in our beliefs and culture. It's about making obsolete the idea that there is such a shortage of freedom and justice that we must take ours at the expense of someone else's, and be grateful and relieved when we are not the ones bearing the brunt of oppression in the world. Because we know that is not freedom or justice.

How have Catalyst's practices developed over time? What are some examples of how you combine political education with organizing?

Over the last twelve years, Catalyst has trained thousands of people and hundreds of organizations—from student activist conferences to faith-based groups to environmentalists. Out of these experiences, we found that longer-term work with organizations and struggles, as well as focusing on key moments of heightened activity, are where we could have a bigger impact. We believe leading from the center rather than critiquing from the sidelines is a critical way that white anti-racists can help make needed change in organizations and institutions, and is a big focus of our leadership development and organizing work. In addition to offering outside support to a core of people doing anti-racist work in an organization, at times Catalyst has either been asked to join an organization, or we have helped create new organizations.

For example, after September 11, Catalyst was supporting a wide range of anti-war efforts, primarily through trainings, as well as helping to organize actions, demonstrations, and conferences. After doing this work for several years, we were asked in 2005 to get involved in the War Resisters

League, an organization founded in 1923 to both build a movement against war and to end the root causes of war. WRL was at a ripe moment of wanting to turn anti-racist principles into practice. Resistance in Brooklyn, an antiimperialist group in New York with members who had worked for years in WRL, made a good case for how Catalyst could make a major contribution. At this time, the anti-war movement was a place where hundreds of thousands of people in the United States were straining to build collective action to challenge racist "wars of choice," and many people hungered for organizing that went beyond marches. Getting involved with WRL was an opportunity to work with thousands of white people to contextualize the war in the bigger picture of U.S. militarism and white supremacy, and to build up opportunities for ongoing community-based organizing that really connected struggles against the wars abroad with resistance to the wars at home. We decided to have collective member Clare Bayard, who was leading Catalyst's efforts in the counter-recruitment movement, run for election to the National Committee (organizing board) of WRL.

Clare writes:

> Our work with the War Resisters League (WRL) has been our longest experiment of placing Catalyst staff in an explicit role within an organization going through an internal anti-racist change process. We came in to support longtime members, including those who had recruited us, and newer staff. Within WRL, we formed a multiracial, multigenerational committee to examine the current situation and possibilities, as well as the organization's history and challenges with collective liberation work. Our committee led a process of changing the structure, program, and orientation of the organization, building off groundwork people had put a lot of labor into over several decades. WRL is approaching its hundred-year anniversary, and has the strengths and weaknesses of an organization with a ton of history.
>
> Partnering with WRL made strategic sense for Catalyst because we were already doing anti-racist organizing within the majority-white anti-war movement, and people within WRL were trying to do that with their base of several thousand people. WRL also has solid,

radical politics at its foundation: the organization's vision is to end the root causes of war, naming capitalism and racism as structures that must be dismantled in order to end wars. The heart of anti-racist transformation for WRL was: "how do we better align with our stated values?"

We knew from Catalyst's work with other organizations that participating in big internal transitions works best when you are also contributing to the programmatic work. I became involved in program work immediately upon joining. In many ways, the organizational transition was led by shifts in program work. We changed who we were focusing on and resourcing, by building alliances with organizations like the Women of Color Resource Center, Iraq Veterans Against the War, and youth of color-led counter-recruitment projects; we shifted whose voices we lifted up; what projects, actions, and campaigns we prioritized; and how we understood and described the "root causes of war" and the domestic effects of war.

People in WRL were less resistant to the changes than was expected, and so the transition proceeded quickly over three or four years, and then we hit the real challenges. As we made big adjustments in our program, including centering relationship building with communities most impacted by U.S. wars and militarism, we found that in the process of change everyone wanted, new questions arose and the organization was no longer on the same page. People were not in agreement about why and how to focus on supporting and connecting with leadership from communities of color. We encountered challenges familiar to every national grassroots organization, including how to build a healthier relationship between the national and local levels. Racism, sexism, and other dynamics of oppression and privilege impacted how we tried to address those challenges.

Overall, WRL made significant and positive changes out of this process. Currently, WRL is building with locally based multiracial initiatives, partnering with Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and South Asia Solidarity Initiative, building with the Iraqi Left, and launching a new demilitarization campaign. Catalyst's ability to

> support WRL in grappling with the layers of complications as they made these shifts would have been minimal had we been just outside consultants or trainers. Working side-by-side on program work, and bringing in our own relationships from Catalyst's work in racial and economic justice organizing, is an entirely different way to bring our strategies and vision into collaborative work. Catalyst has grown a lot from this joint work with WRL.

Another example of Catalyst supporting a core of change makers within an organization is our work with the Anti-Racist Working Group of Common Ground Relief Collective in New Orleans. In this case we worked both as members from within and allies from outside.

Collective member Molly McClure writes:

> Common Ground was a majority-white volunteer effort co-founded by former Black Panther Malik Rahim that emerged immediately following the aftermath of Katrina. Common Ground attracted several thousand volunteers, predominantly young and white, in the first year of the crisis. Entrenched dynamics of white supremacy took hold quickly, made more intense in the pressure cooker of devastation.
>
> We were asked by allies of color and white anti-racist organizers to come to New Orleans to support Black-led reconstruction organizing, and to work with out of town white volunteers to help their efforts serve rather than undermine the short and long-term needs of New Orleans residents. Additionally, because white supremacy was so obvious in the aftermath of the storm, from the murderously slow and inadequate federal response to the racialized violence of the police, thousands of young people were having powerful political awakenings. Catalyst believed that this was a moment where thousands of white activists could not only make a major contribution to the Black-led reconstruction efforts in New Orleans, but also come away with a lifelong commitment to work for racial justice and collective liberation.
>
> Former Catalyst collective member Ingrid Chapman helped found the Anti-Racist Working Group (ARWG) to bring people

together inside Common Ground who shared a commitment to racial justice and wanted to see those politics brought more strongly into the organization. Catalyst organizers joined Common Ground as volunteers and took on program work such as gutting houses, bioremediation, construction, and supporting the daily operation of Common Ground, as a way to build trust, relationships, and to help move anti-racist politics as members of an organization rather than outsiders. We worked to build up the infrastructure, strategy, and leadership of the ARWG in order to make the most anti-racist impact within Common Ground. Catalyst members also spent half of our time volunteering for the People's Hurricane Relief Fund and other majority-Black organizations. This helped us get feedback around what work the ARWG should prioritize, and have relationships of accountability with local organizers of color.

Some successes from our work as part of the ARWG included: getting anti-racist political education institutionalized into Common Ground's mandatory new volunteer orientations which reached thousands of people; coordinating a speakers' series highlighting local organizing efforts led by people of color; facilitating weekly meetings and caucuses for volunteers to talk about how race came up in their work; supporting a higher level of resource sharing with, and respect for, majority—people of color organizations organizing in New Orleans; helping organize for there to be several anti-racist trainings led by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond; and supporting the leadership development of a core of young anti-racist leaders, both white and of color, many of whom ended up staying in New Orleans for many years doing social justice work.

New Orleans was a turning point for Catalyst in thinking more strategically about how to identify organizing conditions, what resources were needed and what we had to offer, and the opportunities and challenges of a particular moment. That turning point led us to prioritize sending organizers on the ground to work with allies in frontline fights for racial justice, such as in Arizona and Alabama during major immigrant justice mobilizations. We still believe that because racism cuts across every element of our lives, anti-racism is needed everywhere. At the same time, after our

work in New Orleans, we began pushing ourselves to be more rigorous in learning how to look for moments with key potential to have a much wider impact than the outcome of the particular battle at hand. We've seen that the struggle is the greatest teacher, as they say, and people in motion often have the opportunities to develop politically in more visceral and accelerated ways.

After 2006, we committed on a deeper level to a number of priority work areas: supporting struggles in New Orleans, the South and Southeast; supporting GI resistance organizing within the anti-war movement; and to strengthen our focus on working-class leadership within white anti-racist organizing. We've tried to keep the big picture of how racial justice is needed everywhere, and also working on a "fewer branches, deeper roots" kind of model for more impact.

In this time period, we want to replace the dominant liberal white paradigms of "multi-culturalism" with collective liberation politics and anti-racist action. We're working towards broader circles of white people having a power analysis about racism, and seeing compelling opportunities to join up with working-class communities of color to push back on the 1 percent. We want and need these politics to spread like wildfire.

Why is leadership development so central to your work? What does it mean, what is it trying to accomplish, and what does it look like? How has your practice of leadership development evolved?

The combination of the words "white people" and "leadership development" often raises suspicion, because we think of the Republican Party or other institutions benefiting the 1 percent, and conclude that white people need *less* leadership, not more. Yet social movements need leadership to win, leaders who can support more and more people to bring vision, strategy, and organizing skills to our struggles. We believe that people with race, class, or gender privilege can and need to bring conscious leadership to social movements and work in joint struggle with oppressed peoples.

Catalyst's anti-racist leadership development focuses on supporting white people to increase their participation in racial justice struggles, and cultivating organizers who can move anti-racist politics and practice in various communities, sectors, and movements. Through mentorship and

training, we help develop people's analysis, skills, confidence, flexibility, and experience so they can make stronger contributions to social justice movements. We work to strengthen people's political clarity, vision, commitment, and resilience practices, so they can stay engaged in anti-racist organizing when the conditions are complex, challenging, and painful.

Many Catalyst members come from activist cultures that are very skeptical of leadership because of the way it can function to suppress democracy and the full participation of people on the margins of a group. But leadership is always present, and when it's informal, dynamics of entitlement often shape who steps into leadership positions, irrelevant of their experience or suitability for the role. Our intention is to develop accountable and democratic leaders, who in turn help support more people to meaningfully participate in democratic processes and develop leadership skills themselves. In our white supremacist society, it's crucial that we have more anti-racist leadership from white people who can move white communities. We have way too much leadership from white people working to advance racist agendas. When white people start becoming conscious of our own internalized privilege, there's a tendency and cultural pressure to step back from any kinds of decision-making, guiding, or visibly central positions. Early in Catalyst's history we contributed to this perception, related to the damage-control mentality we spoke about earlier in the question about organizing from a place of love.

While we still believe it is vital for white activists to check an urge to be at the center of everything or to think we're necessary in order for anything to move forward, we have been pushed to move beyond the notion that the answer for white anti-racists is simply to "step back." Around the time of the Democratic and Republican National Convention protests in 2004, we were challenged by allies of color that the extent to which we and other white anti-racist organizers in our communities were "stepping back" was creating some damaging vacuums of experience, and that our real responsibility was not to hoard and disappear with skills and capacity but to step forward and participate in creating a power-sharing coalition with organizations of color.

For many of us who were politicized in anti-authoritarian political circles, we have been schooled in the idea that "we don't have leaders" and that we don't need them. We have been taught to see leadership as inherently hierarchical, and that in order to resist hierarchy, we need to see our groups

as flat and equal, with no leaders. There are several limitations to this culture of "leaderlessness." First, it makes invisible the leadership that does exist in our organizations, and the differences in political experience that are actually a strength and a resource. Second, when we can't talk about leadership, there's less space for us to talk about real power differences in our organizations. For example, in male-dominated groups, we've had the experience of men using the pretext of "we are all equal here" to avoid being confronted about sexism. Third, if we aren't willing to recognize leadership where it exists in positive ways in our organizations and movements, then we are not able to develop a practice of leadership development that supports more people to build their skills and capacity to contribute meaningfully to political struggles.

Catalyst's commitment to leadership development is connected to our understanding of how social change happens. History teaches us that when frontline communities are in the leadership of social justice struggles, powerful social transformation can happen, because people at the bottom have the knowledge, interest, and power to flip the system, and to lead the transition to another society.

We believe that this process can best be achieved through participatory democratic practices that cultivate political leadership by building grassroots power from below. This principle and practice of participatory democracy as the basis of leadership development emerged through our study of civil rights organizer Ella Baker, who argued that oppressed people are and must become agents of change; that everyday people have the knowledge and lived experience to transform oppressive conditions, and in the process, transform themselves.

We agree with Ella Baker that a key responsibility and quality of leaders is developing more leaders. With this in mind, we created the Anne Braden Anti-Racist Training Program, a four-and-a-half-month leadership development training for white anti-racist activists. The program combines movement history, organizing skills, mentorship, and a volunteer placement in racial justice organizations led by people of color to keep theory and practice firmly linked. The program was named for Anne Braden, a white Southern anti-racist organizer and leader in racial justice movements rooted in communities of color in the South, including the civil rights movement. Braden did similar work to Ella Baker but was focused on white

communities and brought a socialist analysis and community-organizing model to the struggle of rooting out racism in the hearts and minds of white people. As of 2011, one hundred people have gone through Catalyst's Anne Braden Program and are making significant contributions to anti-racist organizing efforts across the United States and in Canada.

When we began the Anne Braden Program, we developed a formal Mentor Circle to pair each of the thirty-five participants with a more experienced white anti-racist organizer. Our intention was to offer another layer of support for the participants' growth and to create a learning opportunity for the mentors, many of whom had been informally mentoring other activists for years or decades. Yet many of the people we asked to be mentors had a hard time understanding why we asked them to take on this role. Part of our approach to transformative leadership development is working with people at many levels of experience as they push through self-limiting beliefs and blocks to accurately assess their own and other people's strengths and areas for growth. We believe mentorship is a two-way street, and good mentors are always learning from the people they're mentoring, while being clear that they have some specific things to offer to support the growth of their mentee. Expanding a culture of mentorship in our movements, where people are both giving and receiving, is key to transmitting lessons, building multigenerational relationships that cross-fertilize, and developing our capacity to draw out lessons from our own practice. For white anti-racists, where we are trying to not lean on people of color to teach us everything about racism, it is important to support each other in the growth process. Mentorship is one way to do that.

Collective member Becca Tumposky writes:

> As a participant in the Braden program, then a member of the Braden Program Leadership Team, and then becoming a collective member, I have been able to experience first-hand the strengths of Catalyst's approach to leadership development. As a participant in the program, Catalyst resourced my political development though trainings on how white supremacy functions as a divide-and-control tactic to undermine popular movements, and how integrating anti-racist organizing practices can strengthen our efforts and create new historic possibilities. The program also supported my development

through one-on-one mentorship, where I was able to explore my political questions and identify places to grow, and resources to help me get there. One of the most important lessons from the program that continues to have a huge impact on my political work was to embrace contradictions as an opportunity for collective growth and development. Instead of expecting people and organizations to be perfect and backing away when they fell short, the program increased my confidence and flexibility to meet people where they are at, to engage and support organizations to move through challenges, and to welcome conflict as part of the work of organizing.

Later, as a member of the Braden Leadership Team, I was able to practice different components of political leadership, including facilitation and training, and also doing one-on-ones with participants myself, supporting them and holding them accountable to their political and organizing goals, as well as to commitments they had made through the program. Through the support of the collective members and leadership team members, I felt prepared to practice doing this, even if it wasn't perfect. I had opportunities to prepare with collective members beforehand, identifying goals for the conversations, what was needed from my role, and what kinds of challenges to expect. Afterward, we would de-brief these experiences, pulling out lessons of what went well, where I could have done things better, and what questions I had moving forward. Now as a collective member of Catalyst, I am in the position of supporting and preparing leadership team members to understand their roles, carry out the goals of the program, and feel confident in their abilities to step into their leadership in moments that require taking risks or having difficult conversations, as well as continuing to get support for this leadership development work.

Building and developing leaders is at the core of organizing. When white people go beyond critiquing organizations for their racism, to actively supporting anti-racist leadership and identifying and developing people that can move these politics, we are able to contribute something much more powerful and meaningful to social justice struggles. This work is not easy, and our capacity to do it evolves through practice. The most significant

political development happens not through workshops and trainings, but in the practice of organizing itself.

We believe that organizations are key building blocks of social movements, and strong organizations are made up of strong leaders who have the skills, analysis, and vision to help advance the work of the organization and the movement forward. As more and more of us take risks, build relationships, and learn to work collaboratively, we begin to create a practice of collective leadership that builds our capacity to someday govern ourselves in the radical democracy that we are working to build.

What are some key lessons from your work to build up vibrant, working class-based, feminist, multiracial movements for collective liberation?

1. *Help people locate their stake in the struggle for collective liberation.* We need white people to make lifelong commitments to anti-racism, not based on feelings of pity or charity for people of color, within the colonial models we've been offered of condescension and "the white man's burden," with its toxic and genocidal history. These commitments must be based on a longing in our bones, in the depths of our hearts, for a world that meets all of our needs.

In workshops, we sometimes ask participants to speak at the front of the room, unrehearsed, about why they are committed to the struggle against white supremacy and for collective liberation. We find the practice of speaking from the heart helps us find our actual stake in the work, becoming more politically grounded in what we lose on a political, economic, social, spiritual, and ecological level by choosing white privilege over collective struggle to end capitalism, and what we want instead. If we want to win over the hearts and minds of masses of white people to this struggle, we need to be able to articulate why, on a historical, political, and humanistic level, they should join us. In our work alongside veterans, for example, we work to increase clarity among everyday folks in this country about how supporting, participating and prolonging racist wars is devastating not only to the people whose home countries we are occupying, but how it's tearing us apart on every level, physically, economically, and spiritually.

We don't want to organize people based on guilt and shame. Those feelings can be a sign of coming into consciousness, recognizing the tremendous damage being done by a system we were taught not to see, and understanding our complicity. But guilt and shame are not good drivers on the road to justice. We need to move towards visionary organizing from our deepest desires, towards health and joy and interdependence. One way to move through guilt and shame is to get clear on what we have to lose if white supremacy continues, and what we have to gain by choosing the side of justice and humanity, and locating ourselves alongside the people of the world struggling for liberation.

2. *This work is complex and messy.* Many of us in Catalyst were schooled in a model of anti-racism drawn from the "solidarity" model. Having this framework has been incredibly important for us, in challenging the white chauvinism and insularity that we'd often brought as well-intentioned white people into our activism. While solidarity work has a legacy of complex, graceful, powerful work in movements including Black Power and civil rights, indigenous sovereignty, and Central American anti-intervention work, it is often presented in a dangerously oversimplified form as "white people must follow the leadership of people of color." The reduction of on-the-ground organizing work into such a binary and depoliticized formula does not carry us very far towards liberation or reflect the intricacies of reality.

People of color do not have a unified set of demands for white people to line up behind. People of color span the political spectrum, and are not all advancing a liberatory agenda. And among people of color who are organizing for collective liberation, there is still no united banner. White activists need to take the best of what solidarity organizing offers, which is its challenge to internalized white superiority and emphasis on seeking and supporting the leadership of organizers of color with whom you have important political alignment. Not that you have to agree on everything—that is where it's crucial to develop our own political compass in order to be able to navigate complicated realities of work on the ground. That also necessitates building actual working relationships. Through joint struggle, we forge relationships, trust, and dialogue. Sometimes as white people we want to come into an organizing situation and offer our critique and

challenge before we've gotten our hands dirty doing some actual work. That's another function of privilege—deciding that our best role is to sit on the sidelines and critique everything that doesn't meet our standards, rather than getting in there and offering our labor and skills.

For Catalyst, leading from the center rather than critiquing from the sidelines is a crucial part of how we organize, as well as a major thrust of our leadership development work with other white people. White anti-racists need to be doing, not just talking. Picking things apart is a skill white people are often more interested in practicing than the slow and difficult practice of organizing—meeting people where they are at, bringing people together, building organizations and alliances, developing long-term strategies with short-term plans, and implementing organizing efforts that have the possibility to transform people's daily lives towards our larger visions of liberation. We cannot stay on the sidelines in this struggle. There's too much at stake. And that is where it gets messy, but it also gets beautiful, brilliant, full of joy, heartache, learning, and possibility. It's also where we see glimpses of the new world in the shell of the old.

3. *Work with white people while staying grounded in multiracial organizing.* Who is going to work with white people on issues of racism if not other white people? It's not the responsibility of people of color to continue educating us, often at serious emotional and material expenses. There's plenty of other work that organizers of color have on their plates when they wind up frequently shouldering the burden of explaining to us how racism is affecting our actions, our working relationships, our communities.

Often white people with a consciousness about racism pull away from the white people, spaces, and institutions in their lives and instead spend all their time in communities of color. Some of this may be about wanting affirmation, and some of it may be the discomfort with hanging out with white people who are not anti-racist. Many times, those of us who aspire to be white anti-racist organizers also have deep desires to be told by people of color that we are "good" white people. For there to be "good white people" there have to be "bad white people." This encourages discarding and distancing from anyone who messes up, because it might taint us by association. This self-imposed binary doesn't have room for all of us to be in the long-term complicated process of decolonizing our internalized racism,

which means we'll all make mistakes sometimes, and we all need the support of being held accountable, given feedback, and not cast away. In the early years of Catalyst, we were pushed a lot on the importance of fighting the urge to flee from the communities in which we were raised, or to cut off contact from white people in our lives who need a lot of support in confronting their own racism. We encourage white anti-racists to stay engaged with white people in their lives, and also to be strategic about their time, talents, and energy. Rather than put everything into arguing with the most racist member of your family, and gauge your success on transforming that one person, think about moving people in your life who are ready, open, or have not really formed strong opinions build momentum rather than solidify stagnation.

That's on the individual level. On an organizational and movement level, we must be in constant conversation (and collaboration, where appropriate) with multiracial organizations and movements. It's vital for majority-white activist groups to connect with organizations based in communities of color working on similar issues. Even starting from a lowest common denominator approach of "do no harm," white activists need to be staying tuned in to the demands, framing, needs and challenges of organizations and communities of color that may be directly affected by the actions we take.

Looking beyond that, building a cohesive multiracial movement takes a lot of coordination and a lot of trust building. Organizing white people to collective action for justice cannot happen in isolation from the guidance and needs of people of color. Real change is going to take multiracial coalitions, and in order for that to happen, we need more white people who are ready to side with justice and see the deep connections they have with communities of color.

4. *Anti-racist organizing is transformative organizing.* Realigning white people away from the agenda of the 1 percent is a revolutionary project. The system of white supremacy we have in the United States, twinned with capitalism, was developed as a strategy of divide-and-rule. White privilege was created to push non-ruling-class white people to throw in their lot with the white owning class, the planters and merchants and plantation owners, and break from their actual shared interest with enslaved Africans in

overcoming shared terrible living conditions of indentured servitude, which got worse with the implementation of chattel slavery and legalized racial oppression of Africans and indigenous nations.

As a result, white people have spent several hundred years being told that we have more in common with the bankers than our co-workers, taught to fear and hate our neighbors, all while the i percent continues to consolidate their wealth and power by robbing everyone. This realignment is a massive project, but we know it's possible, and have seen glimpses of how powerful it can be, from the white abolitionist children of plantation owners, to the white anti-imperialist dykes who helped break Black liberation leader Assata Shakur out of jail.

Anti-racist organizing is transformative organizing. It calls upon white people to transform ourselves, to make a lifetime commitment to healing from the ways racism takes us out of alignment with humanity. It challenges us to take collective action, to bring more white people into taking active responsibility to end institutional racism. Transformative organizing refers to the dynamic interplay of change on the individual and institutional levels —how as individuals, we are healed and transformed and grow through the process of transforming how we structure society.

Transformative organizing offers a different model than the common "transactional" style of organizing, which suggests that we organize simply as a means towards a very specific short-term end—the idea that a campaign is built solely towards winning a particular concession. Transformative organizing refers to the dynamic interplay of change on the individual and institutional levels—how as individuals we grow, heal, and change through the process of transforming society. It's transformative to offer our lives and hearts to the work of collective liberation. In the struggle, we come to find community in deep ways, sometimes after we've lost some relationships because of our political principles. It is profoundly powerful to know, deep down, what side we are on, to know where and with whom our interests lie, and to build the future together.

Section V

Conclusion

WE CAN DO THIS

Key Lessons for More Effective and Healthy Liberation Praxis

We want to build powerful, dynamic, visionary movements against imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. We want to develop and act from effective strategies to build broad-based movements with working-class communities and communities of color at the center. We want women and gender-oppressed people bringing leadership alongside feminist men, anti-racist whites, and class-conscious middle and upper-class people. We want to bring together progressive forces in all of our communities, workplaces, schools, and places of worship to win and create collective liberation. We want to build organizations and campaigns that are winning concrete improvements guided by a vision of systemic change and a strategy to build up working-class and oppressed people's leadership. We want to proactively take on the divisions of race, class, and gender, and make our work against systems of oppression a catalyst that creates courageous politics, leadership, organizations, alliances, and institutions. We want to nurture healthy, loving, playful, and celebratory culture that invites, welcomes, and sustains people of all backgrounds, age groups, and life circumstances into movement work. In short, we want effective methods to achieve systemic changes that are transformative and healing for our lives, relationships, communities, institutions, and society as we work towards liberation visions and values.

There are thousands of incredible organizations, campaigns, and efforts working to achieve aspects of what we want. Nonetheless, it is easy to feel overwhelmed when taking a realistic look at what we are up against, what we are currently achieving, and what it will take for us to truly build a feminist, anti-racist, economic justice majority that can achieve our middle-

term and long-term goals. Many of us involved in movement work have experienced or currently experience depression, anxiety, or burnout. Many of us have gone through phases of being jaded and cynical as defense mechanisms to the heartbreaking experiences of seeing ourselves, our comrades, and our organizing fall short of our goals and standards, over and over again. In fact, many of us participate in activist cultures in which being cynical and jaded and working yourself ragged are the signs of being experienced and dedicated. In the face of devastating injustice, with frequent defeats and unrealistic expectations for ourselves, it is understandable why so many of us experience and perpetuate unhealthy practices in our organizing. This shows up externally in how we do our work, how we relate to other social justice efforts, and how we go about trying to build broad-based movements of everyday people.

There is a common tendency for people to be overly critical of those who most closely resemble themselves: activists who are making the same mistakes you made a year ago; white people and men as a way of distancing yourself from them. Tearing other people down can become a way to prove, to yourself and others, that you've "got it figured out." These are all common dynamics that emerge, but we need to work through them to become more effective and healthy.

I've learned many lessons about this while working alongside my comrades, and in particular through my years of organizing with Catalyst Project and the Heads Up Collective. Ingrid Chapman, who I worked with side by side for years in Catalyst Project, often said, "we need to overcome self-limiting beliefs and practices that hold us back from reaching our potential." I share these lessons here in that spirit, with the hope that they help all of us to continue to grow and sustain ourselves and our movements.

1. *Cultivate a developmental organizing approach.* Continually look for patterns, stages, and common dynamics that help move individuals, relationships, and efforts towards their goals, as well as what hinders them. For example, building momentum and people in motion are two of the main factors in creating successful movements. By momentum, I mean one action leads to two and then three and then ten. By people in motion, I mean people taking collective action together, and in particular by taking collective action that pushes those participating to overcome fears, take on

new responsibilities, and experience their power through direct action. Sometimes momentum and people in motion builds quickly in ways that everyone can notice, and sometimes it takes years of slow and patient work that very few can see and then it takes off. But when it happens, when a movement moment emerges, in which large numbers of people are getting active, momentum is building, and people, in growing numbers, are in motion, having a developmental approach can help us make the most of it.

Examples of stages that we can become more aware of include the ways that relationships between individuals develop in organizations, how organizations form alliances, how large-scale movements emerge, and how movements ebb and flow over time. Other examples include identifying stages that most campaigns go through, that white anti-racists and feminist men go through on their paths, or that most of us go through when becoming activists and what hinders and helps us take on organizing and leadership roles. This is not to suggest that all relationships develop the same way or that leadership development looks the same for everyone. Rather, I am proposing identifying common steps and stages so that we can make meaning of our own experiences while also developing effective strategies to reach our goals.

We can learn about these steps and stages through organizing manuals like the Midwest Academy's *Organizing for Social Change* and Si Kahn's *How People Get Power* or going through organizing training programs. We can gain insights and lessons from studying past movements. We can also learn from those who have gone before us, talking with movement elders or even activists with a decade or more experience than us. Through inter-generational relationships and mentorship, older activists can pass on lessons and stories while younger activists can encourage new thinking and approaches to help everyone to continue growing and learning.

The primary way we develop our understanding of steps and stages in various processes of organizing and movement building is from our own experiences. That said, without taking time to reflect on our experience, we can end up repeating the same mistakes over and over again. Additionally, it is even more powerful when we can reflect with others who can bring their own unique perspectives to the conversation and, together, we can draw out more nuanced, informed lessons. One of the keys to creating positive spaces for individual and group reflection is to emphasize a culture of excitement

for learning and growth, rather than one in which you or others are afraid to admit you don't already have everything figured out.

One of the strengths of many younger generation activists and organizers who were politicized in the 1990s and 2000s is that we have access to both an incredible amount of analysis about the shortcomings of past movements and complex intersectional analysis of systems of oppression and privilege. One of the shortcomings is that many of us have come to believe that in order for our efforts and the efforts of others to be successful, they need to address all of the shortcomings of the past and fully integrate and have a complex analysis about nearly everything, in all we do. In other words, in order to begin, our efforts must already address all systems of oppression, have well-developed positions on a wide range of Left issues, and know how to overcome the obstacles that past movements have faced. This is an impossibly tall order and makes it very difficult to generate momentum, but many of us hold ourselves and others to this standard. This is one of the reasons why many of our organizations, campaigns, and efforts are either short-lived or so small. They either fall apart under the weight of unrealistic expectations or they remain too small to maintain the high level of political unity and functionality that our expectations require. This isn't to suggest that we abandon these smaller efforts, but that we balance them with the need for large-scale mass organizations and campaigns that make space for a wide variety of people with many different experiences and levels of analysis to participate.

A developmental approach can help us recognize that processes have stages of growth, and that rather than trying to meet all of our expectations, we can set goals and work towards them step by step. This means coming to terms with the reality that we will almost always be simultaneously living our values and achieving our objectives while also falling short of these values and objectives. The skill is learning how to do this in a way that helps us grow and inspires momentum to move forward rather than stifling us and leaving us stuck.

This is not an argument for everyone to just acknowledge we are all doing our best and lay down our tools of critique. Critique is vital to growth, and often critique opens the space for transformative reflection and lessons. However, a developmental approach can help us make our critique more constructive. We can put forward constructive feedback that helps others

and ourselves overcome limitations and challenges and offers encouragement and support that builds momentum, as opposed to using the limitations and challenges to simply dismiss, judge, reject and stall momentum.

Additionally, a developmental approach doesn't change the reality that there are major differences of analysis, strategy, tactics, and approaches in the movement and that while many can be complementary, some are at odds with one other. Nonetheless, a developmental approach can help us find productive ways for our differences to co-exist and often complement each other, while also minimizing the damage of differences that are at odds with one another. Momentum and people in motion are both needed to build and express our power in ways that win and create long lasting systemic change. Additionally, momentum and being in motion pushes people out of their day-to-day routines and comfort zones and creates incredible opportunities for individual and collective growth. A developmental approach to organizing helps us learn about and anticipate shortcomings and challenges, so that we can take them on and build power through the experience of overcoming them.

2. *Set goals.* In his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,* Stephen Covey talks about "beginning with the end in mind." Whether it's a meeting, demonstration, event, conference, campaign, or organization, goals help guide your planning and implementation processes and serve as a compass when you have to make changes to your plan. Your goals should include concrete and measurable outcomes (such as number of people, winning a raise increase of x amount) as well as less tangible aims (such as "people feel a sense of their own power taking direct action" and "people have a transformative experience.")

Take time to explore the importance of the goals and what they mean to people."Why do we want to get people from x, y, and z there?" "What does it mean for people to feel a sense of their own power, and what contributed to moments when you felt your own?" Goal setting can help draw out wisdom from the group, work through some disagreements on the front end, develop shared understandings of what you're trying to accomplish, and generate unified momentum. It is also important to have goals that focus on personal growth and the growth of the organization/campaign. Goals help

us align our strategy and tactics with our vision. Goals help us identify tangible steps we can take towards realizing our larger vision

Evaluate the success of achieving these goals. Taking time to evaluate allows us to recognize what we have accomplished and what we can learn from the experience. Collective evaluation also offers an opportunity to learn from different people's perspectives and gain insights and lessons that can become group knowledge. Lessons learned from failed attempts frequently lead to ideas for successful new attempts.

3. *Focus on assets rather than deficits.* When doing anti-racist work with majority-white groups or feminist work with men, it is often easy for people to talk at length about the many mistakes and shortcomings they have. It is often far more difficult to talk about what they feel good about, what they do well, and what positive contributions they are making. Many of us have internalized negative spiral thinking from systems of oppression that tell us in subtle and profound ways why we, our families, our traditions, and our communities are inferior, wrong, insufficient, and unwanted failures that need to consume the right products, have the right wealthy lifestyle, and look, love, and act right to get closer to success.

Negative spirals often begin with a reasonable negative thought, like "we couldn't get enough people out to pull off that action." Rather than a realistic evaluation of what went wrong, however, the spiral then goes to, "how can we win anything if we couldn't even pull this off," "we're a bunch of failures," "no one really cares," "we're doomed," and so on towards self-loathing, blame, and alienation that drain momentum, undermine confidence, and cut us off from friends and family.

Asset thinking includes questions such as:

- What went well?
- What am I (or we) good at?
- What are the things I take for granted about this situation, organization, experience that I actually really appreciate?
- What are the positives that can help us achieve our goals, improve our weaknesses, and give us momentum to move forward?

- How have we taken on challenges and improved in the past, and what can we learn from that to help us continue do that now and tomorrow?
- What did I accomplish today?

It is a real skill to see the positive around you and build up positive momentum while also working to address the negative.

Because so many of us on the Left are beaten down, it is a habit to beat ourselves down further. In fact, some on the Left have developed a special skill for holding on to defeat in the face of success, giving shortcomings and challenges so much attention that even highly successful efforts begin to look more like failures. In the early 2000s, Catalyst Project realized that we were doing this with the global justice movement. In our political education and in our writing (including much of my own), we so frequently focused on ways white privilege negatively impacted the mass mobilizations of the global justice movement that many who went through our workshops came to believe that the global justice movement and mass direct action mobilizations in particular had been failures. We realized that a whole new generation of activists were coming up in the wake of the critiques without also experiencing the many positives of the movement and mass direct action as a transformative strategy. While we actively supported the mass mobilizations, and believed the global justice movement was making enormously positive contributions to building a powerful grassroots Left, we often assumed that the successes of the global justice movement were self-evident and overly focused on the critique. This was a mistake on our part and we took steps to change our approach. One of those changes was to be asset-oriented rather than deficit-oriented.

In addition to the negative spirals of deficit thinking, many of us are disconnected from histories of people's struggles and unaware of the incredible victories and improvements for which our movements are responsible. Without understanding the complex histories of past movements, many of us have only anecdotal stories of mistakes that individuals and groups made, and entire movements along with their successes and victories get dismissed. There is a reason the ruling class doesn't want us to know these histories, as being robbed of the knowledge

and legacies of our ancestors further leads us to believe in our inability to win.

Asset thinking helps us develop our skills to realistically see the strengths of the present and the lessons and gains of the past. It helps us focus on realizing our potential rather than obsessing on our shortcomings and the shortcomings of others. One of the ways to help develop asset thinking is through practices of expressing appreciation. Take time to appreciate people, organizations, and efforts in your life. Try to be specific about what you appreciate about people, both to help you see a wider range of positive contributions, and because it has a bigger impact on the person receiving it. For example, rather than saying "you're amazing," explain the reasons why you think the person is amazing. The next step is to apply asset thinking to yourself. This will likely be more difficult, but it critically important. Most of us can come up with long lists of what we don't like about ourselves, but struggle to name what we like about ourselves. Being able to appreciate and love ourselves is part of decolonizing ourselves from the systems of oppression that thrive on our self-hatred and insecurity. Help build the movement by appreciating who you are, what you accomplish, what you do well, rather than focusing just on the ways you haven't lived up to (likely over-ambitious) expectations. Having compassion and love for yourself is an important part of becoming a leader and organizer for liberation.

4. *Focus on opportunities rather than problems.* An opportunity-oriented approach to organizing recognizes that many of the major problems that we face in organizing are issues that we need to expect and incorporate into our strategy. We can't wish them away or think that a good study group will solve the problem. Racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia are going to be part of any contemporary mass movement, because mass, by definition, means messy. We need millions of people in motion for justice and we are going to bring all of our contradictions with us. If you don't want messy, you don't want mass; there's no two ways about it. We need to anticipate these contradictions and limitations, develop leadership and organizational capacity that address what can be addressed, maintain momentum in the face of problems that can't yet be addressed, and look for opportunities to advance collective liberation politics in mass movements over time that

allows for the movement to grow and mature through experience. We need to focus on our spheres of influence, the places where we can make an impact, and leverage our resources and power to take advantage of opportunities to help movements be more effective and grow. If we want mass without the messiness, we need to change our expectations, so that we can be dynamic organizers working to build in mass movement moments, rather than sit back with critique because the mass movement moment doesn't look and act the way we think it's supposed to.

When Occupy Wall Street emerged and quickly grew into a mass movement, there were many activists, particularly those already involved in social justice/Left organizations, who were dismissive and focused on all the shortcomings they identified. A mass, largely spontaneous, movement caught many of us off guard and a significant amount of us had a reactionary response. Coming from this place of reaction, many longtime activists acted as if mass movements were supposed to emerge without contradictions and with fully developed sophisticated strategies and analysis. As millions of people, in thousands of cities, towns, suburbs, and rural areas around the country, took to the streets, coalescing around a progressive economic justice analysis that named the ruling class and named capitalism as an unjust system that creates inequality, some of us in the initial weeks focused almost entirely on the problems, losing sight of the incredible opportunities the movement presented.

This is in no way an argument against challenging the problems that emerge. For example, in Occupy Wall Street, when four activists of color blocked the Occupy Declaration until it acknowledged white supremacy, it was a defining moment that strengthened the movement. The difference in this example versus just dismissing the Occupy movement because it didn't have a good race analysis, is that they were engaging the moment and found an opportunity to make a hugely important contribution that helped open space for tens of thousands of activist of color and white anti-racists around the country to get involved who may not otherwise have. In addition to blocking the Declaration and helping rewrite it, these activists along with many other activists of color made vital contributions through the website In Front and Center: Critical Voices of the 99%. One of the key reasons this website, which gathered dozens of essays and reflections from activists around the country, was so successful is that the people writing critical

analysis of the movement weren't doing it from the sidelines, they were actively bringing their leadership to addressing the weaknesses while building the overall momentum of the movement.

An opportunity orientation assumes that there will be significant limitations and problems in almost all situations, and that while we need to see those clearly, we need to look for opportunities where transformative and powerful organizing can make a significant difference. Looking again to the example of Occupy, many community-based organizations in working-class communities and communities of color in Oakland and San Francisco identified opportunities with Occupy, despite the shortcomings, and got involved quickly and made major contributions, alongside many tenacious Occupy activists, to mobilizing a successful general strike and dozens of actions against banks, housing foreclosures, and for workers' rights.[1]

Another example of an opportunity orientation comes from post-Katrina organizing in New Orleans. Kali Akuno, a longtime organizer with the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement who was working with the People's Hurricane Relief Fund, was leading a team of organizers preparing for hundreds of students from historically Black Colleges to arrive and help out with relief efforts. Akuno explained that with a large number of class-privileged students arriving, we should expect that they would bring classist condescending attitudes towards working-class and poor residents of New Orleans, despite most of the students being Black. He went on to say that we should look for opportunities for them to see working-class Black residents in positions of leadership to help challenge these attitudes and be prepared to deal with issues that might arise because of these attitudes. Akuno concluded by explaining how we need to hold these students accountable for their behavior, but not blame them for the attitudes capitalism ingrained in them. He acknowledged the problem but focused on opportunities for transformation and didn't blame the students for lacking consciousness that there was no reasonable reason to expect them to have.

If more of us can bring this perspective to our organizing, then we can get better at identifying opportunities and acting on them to build on our strengths, address our weaknesses, and build momentum, rather than having the same issues and dynamics undermine our efforts over and over again. Remember, the problems we face are part of the struggle to create

change, they either become obstacles that halt us, or opportunities that help us learn, mature, and grow. How we prepare for the problems, emotionally and politically, and face them makes a huge difference.[2]

5. *Practice both/and thinking to break out of dichotomous thinking that forces complex realities into simplistic right/wrong categories.* Reality is complex and we need to be complex in our thinking. For many activists, we're looking for clear instructions on the right way and the wrong way. We devour books by Left activists of the past, study social movement history, read zines and blogs by other activists, and go to political education events and workshops. For many of us, there is a moment when we realize that we've accumulated a huge amount of analysis, but that there are aren't easy answers about how to apply it. Add to this dilemma, that many of us come to consciousness about ways we have some form of institutional privilege and the negative impacts it can have on others in the movement, and fear of making mistakes and causing damage puts the brakes on our ability to move forward. Many of us end up ill-equipped to navigate the complexity of the world, when facing questions such as:

- What do you mean the local leader of the racial justice struggle is blatantly sexist?
- How do we simultaneously acknowledge privilege, but remember to be powerful?
- When is hierarchical structure actually more empowering and effective than horizontal structure and vice versa?
- How can we have respectful debate and disagreement across race, class, and gender that allows people to be individuals rather than just a member of a"monolithic" identity group, while maintaining an understanding of systemic power, and do it in a way that builds cohesion rather than tears us apart?
- How do you address the weaknesses of a leader in the community in a way that actually builds up that leader and the community, and avoids the dynamic of devouring leaders?

- What do you do when the "formula" from a workshop about who is supposed to bring leadership in a situation doesn't work out that way, and now the situation is calling for you to step up?
- How can we organize in ways that draw the best from the politics of identity rooted in a socialist feminist anti-racist analysis, and avoid the dead end of identity as politics?

Often in our work, we need to shift away from dichotomous either/or thinking and practice a both/and framework. Rather than entirely right or wrong, reality is, thankfully, far more complex. We need to practice both/and thinking as a way to break out of fear of making mistakes, of thinking that we can wait until the perfect movement, the perfect organization, the perfect strategy emerges and then boom, we jump on and away we go. No, we need to build up organizations, campaigns, and struggles in far from ideal circumstances, find the assets and opportunity in the conditions we face, and leverage our collective resources and power to fulfill our goals. Both/and thinking can help us experiment and create hybrids that take the best from different traditions and practices.

For example, yes, I believe in bottom-up democratic power-sharing. In some situations I believe consensus-based decision-making and collective structures with empowered leadership and sharing of roles and responsibilities are highly effective. And I also believe in liberatory hierarchies with clear roles and expectations, differentiated decision-making power, supervision, and channels for communication and mutual accountability to both goals and values of the organization. Leadership and organizational form is actually one of the areas where I have struggled the most to bring a both/and framework, so let me take this example further. For me, authoritarian hierarchy assumes that power imbalances are permanent, natural, and those higher in the hierarchy are better, in every sense of the word, than those lower in the hierarchy. Liberatory hierarchies are based in the belief that all people have the capacity to lead, that good leaders are also followers, that people playing many different roles are making important contributions, that delegation of specific roles can make space for more people to participate, that opportunities should be available for people throughout the organization to grow politically and personally with the goal of creating more leaders not just for the current organization,

but for the larger movement as a whole (i.e., creating study groups for volunteers, connecting interns to mentors, creating roles for people with less availability to make important contributions but not be in long meetings, sending data-entry volunteers to political events and skills-development workshops, and so on).

Often our discussions either assume that horizontal is good and hierarchical is bad, or that horizontal is ineffective and hierarchical is effective. Both/and thinking can help us look at what the strengths and weaknesses of both are and experiment with what works best to achieve our overall goals. In the example above, I looked to accounts of democratic organizations in movement literature, such as Francesca Polletta's *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements,* and to books from the business management and leadership section of the bookstore, like John Maxwell's *Developing the Leader Within You* and *Developing the Leaders Around You.* Both/and thinking helps open space to think creatively about what can be done, and how to do it. It helps us move from a framework of "this is what I'm suppose to think to be a good activist" towards a framework of evaluating a variety of perspectives and ideas to help us make choices about what will help us practice our values and achieve our goals.

Here's another example that comes up regularly. Activists routinely reject organizations and campaigns on the grounds that they are politically problematic. Often these are larger-scale mass organizations and campaigns. An either/or framework leads activists to think that an organization is either has good politics or it doesn't, that it is either doing things right or it isn't, but reality is far more complicated. All of our organizations, campaigns and efforts have limitations, are problematic in some ways and positive in other ways. Generally the larger an organization or campaign is, the larger the problems are, as well as the positives. A both/and framework encourages activists to look at it from multiple perspectives: What are the shortcomings? What are the strengths? Are there things about this organization/campaign that are unique and significant towards accomplishing our larger goals? Are there opportunities to help build this organization/ campaign in ways that will accomplish short-term goals and put us in a better position to achieve medium and long-term goals? If this organization/campaign ceased to exist would it be a blow to the movement or not? While we can agree that there are many ways this

organization/campaign could have done things better from the beginning, if we agree that it is also doing important work, what can we have influence over now, and how can we help make the effort as successful as possible and overcome as many challenges as possible?

This isn't a suggestion to abandon strategic thinking and just put our energies into anything doing positive work. Rather, it is encouragement to evaluate efforts in a complex way and look beyond quick judgment and dismissal of the vast majority of efforts around us as not measuring up. We want to devote our energies to the efforts we believe will do the most to help us achieve our goals. Using a both/and framework can help us think through our own work, and it can also help us evaluate and relate to the work that many others are doing as well. This is a framework that can help us break out of the insular radical "ghetto" and inspire us to join with others to build movement to achieve radical change.

Both/and thinking can help us look at the world around us in a more expansive way. Rather than feeling like we're constantly trying to fit the complex world into the "one right way" or a static list of dos and don'ts, we can use our principles and analysis to help navigate the world, allowing space for our principles and analysis to become more dynamic and nuanced through practice. This is often referred to as "getting our hands dirty in the real world." It is important to remember that dirt is where we plant seeds for food that nourishes us, forests that sustain us, and gardens that bring beauty to our lives.

6. *Embrace the beauty and joy in the world.* It is important that, even as we have a keen eye for injustice and a passion to end it, we also open ourselves up to the beauty and joy of the world around us. Sometimes, this is talked about as a way to sustain our work for justice. But I believe it is far more than that. It is important that we feel connected to our own humanity and the humanity of others through literature, poetry, dancing, art, performance, romance, sports, spirituality, food, entertainment, play, friendships, and so on. We need to nourish our minds, bodies, and hearts as a way to keep us grounded in what we are fighting for, to enjoy life and to remain humble and compassionate through our connections with the world beyond activism. Sometimes revolutionary commitment can get translated into sacrifice and martyrdom, and while there is real sacrifice, we must also embrace the

beauty and joy of liberation commitment. Theologian and civil rights leader Howard Thurman said,"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive." While there will always be work that most of us would rather not do, but must be done, our movement must primarily be a place that helps people come alive, rather than a place defined by what must be done. Let us bring more beauty and joy into movement work that welcomes, inspires, and nourishes people. This begins by us doing this in our own lives and encouraging those we work with to do the same.

7. *Be in your power and encourage others to be in theirs as well.* We want a world in which everyone can shine and express their talents, skills, passions, and purpose. When we start taking on systems of oppression and how they impact our organizing, many of us begin to believe that in order for other people to shine, we need to hide or minimize ourselves. Many of us struggle against internalized oppression that attacks our self-worth and makes it difficult to bring our shine.

While it is true that we often have limited time and resources and we can't implement everyone's ideas, it is also true that there is an abundance of work that needs to be done and an abundance of opportunity for people to make incredible things happen. At the height of the Occupy movement, new direct actions, new YouTube videos, new tactics, and new artwork were shared, and new pictures of everyday people identifying as part of the 99 percent appeared every day. People at Occupy encampments and actions around the country were filling hundreds of important roles. This was an example of people stepping into their power to make things happen and, in the process, they inspired and encouraged others to do the same. This happens on a smaller scale as well in our organizations and campaigns. A major responsibility for organizers and leaders is to identify roles and opportunities for others to step into and bring their own shine to making an event happen, or pulling off a successful action, or nurturing the culture of the organization through community building, political education, and rituals.

8. *Remember that our ultimate goal isn't to effectively protest injustice, but to win and create a just society.* For many of us, our political work is focused on

resisting that which we oppose. This is of course necessary and vitally important. What we usually aren't as prepared to do is govern based on what we are for. By govern, I mean bringing leadership to help run organizations and institutions large and small in our movement and throughout our society.

By govern, I mean moving from opposition to illegitimate authority based in systems of oppression to generating and practicing legitimate authority based in systems of liberation. Many of us already do this, whether it is as parents, teachers, leaders in organizations and institutions, elected officials, and a wide range of other roles many of us play in society.[3]

However, much of the work we do that brings our liberation politics and values into our families, classrooms, workplaces, community institutions, recreational activities, associations, businesses, official governing bodies, and many other places isn't thought of as movement work. Building the movement is usually thought of as building explicitly activist-oriented groups, campaigns, and projects. It is absolutely vital that we build activist movement. And, to help us further our goals of long-term systemic change, we must also understand movement work as bring our liberation politics, strategies, and values throughout society. While we organize to build Left movement, let us always remember that our ultimate goal is a vibrant and healthy democratic and socialist society.

The more we embrace the many different ways people work towards this goal, the more we can understand our movement efforts as more than just a vehicle to protest injustice, but also as everyday people in motion with shared values and vision working to transform, govern and run society from the ground up. It isn't a linear path in which one day all of our objectives are achieved. It is an ongoing process, one that we are already living in.

Let us make powerful contributions towards collective liberation. Let us embrace the complexities, challenges, and beauty of building effective movements. Let us organize from a place of love that helps us honor and respect our own humanity and the humanity of others. Let us build, create, celebrate, learn from our mistakes, and win.

We can do this.

1 For an excellent overview of the political organizing from which Occupy emerged, how it evolved as a mass movement, and where it is going, see *We Are Many: Reflections on Movement Strategy from Occupation to Liberation,* edited by Kate Khatib, Margaret Killjoy, and Mike McGuire.

2 One of the ways that Catalyst Project began preparing for emotionally and politically challenging organizing experiences was to organizationally embrace and promote healing and wellness practices. The book *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others* by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky with Connie Burk was extremely helpful in this process.

3 My thinking on the need for legitimate authority is deeply influenced by my comrades who are parents and have taken on a wide range of roles in society beyond the traditional activist movement. In particular Rahula Janowski, Jeff Larson, Nisha Anand, and Marc Mascarenhas-Swan have influenced my thinking.

AUTHOR BIO

Chris Crass is a longtime organizer, educator, and writer working to build powerful working class-based, feminist, multiracial movements for collective liberation. Throughout the 1990s, he was an organizer with Food Not Bombs, an economic justice anti-poverty group and network. With them, he helped build up the direct action-based anti-capitalist Left internationally. Building on the successes and challenges of the mass direct action convergences of the global justice movement, most notably in Seattle against the WTO in 1999, he helped launch Catalyst Project. Catalyst Project combines political education and organizing to develop and support anti-racist politics, leadership, and organizing in white communities and builds dynamic multiracial alliances locally and nationally. Through Catalyst Project, where he was the co-coordinator for more than a decade, he worked with tens of thousands of activists working on a wide range of issues in their communities and on their campuses. Through workshops on anti-racism, feminism for men, developing collective leadership and lessons from past movements, Crass has supported hundreds of organizations and leaders around the country.

In 2000, he was a co-founder of the Colours of Resistance network, which served as a think tank and clearinghouse of anti-racist feminist analysis and tools for activists in the United States and Canada. After September 11, 2001, he helped to found the Heads Up Collective which brought together a cadre of white anti-racist organizers to build up the multiracial Left in the San Francisco Bay Area through alliances between the majority-white anti-war movement and locally based economic and racial justice struggles in communities of color. He was also a member of the Against Patriarchy Men's Group that supported men in developing their feminist analysis and their feminist leadership.

He has written widely about anti-racist and anarchist organizing, lessons from women of color feminism, and strategies to build visionary movements. His essays have been translated into half a dozen languages,

taught in hundreds of classrooms, and included in over a dozen anthologies including *Globalize Liberation: How to Uproot the System and Build a Better World, On the Road to Healing: An Anthology for Men Ending Sexism,* and *We Have Not Been Moved: Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America.*

He graduated from San Francisco State University in Race, Class, Gender and Power Studies. Originally from California, he currently lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, with his partner Jardana Peacock and their son, River. He is a member of the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church and has worked with dozens of faith-based communities to help build up the spiritual Left.

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WE HAVE NOT BEEN MOVED
RESISTING RACISM AND MILITARISM IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICA
EDITED BY ELIZABETH 'BETITA' MARTÍNEZ, MATT MEYER, AND MANDY CARTER
FOREWORD BY CORNEL WEST
AFTERPOEMS BY SONIA SANCHEZ AND ALICE WALKER

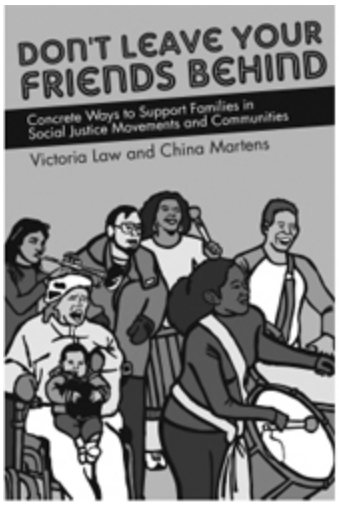
We Have Not Been Moved

Resisting Racism and Militarism in 21st Century America

Edited by Elizabeth 'Betita' Martínez, Mandy Carter & Matt Meyer
Introduction by Cornel West
and Afterpoems by Alice Walker & Sonia Sanchez
608 pages

We Have Not Been Moved is a compendium addressing the two leading pillars of U.S. Empire. Inspired by the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who called for a "true revolution of values" against the racism, militarism, and materialism which he saw as the heart of a society "approaching spiritual death," this book recognizes that—for the most part—the traditional peace movement has not been moved far beyond the half-century-old call for a deepening critique of its own prejudices. While reviewing the major points of intersection between white supremacy and the war machine through both historic and contemporary articles from a diverse range of scholars and activists, the editors emphasize what needs to be done now to move forward for lasting social change. Produced in collaboration with the War Resisters League, the book also examines the strategic possibilities of radical transformation through revolutionary nonviolence.

Among the historic texts included are rarely-seen writings by antiracist icons such as Anne Braden, Barbara Deming, and Audre Lorde, as well as a dialogue between Dr. King, revolutionary nationalist Robert F. Williams, Dave Dellinger, and Dorothy Day. Never-before-published pieces appear from civil rights and gay rights organizer Bayard Rustin and from celebrated U.S. pacifist supporter of Puerto Rican sovereignty Ruth Reynolds. Additional articles making their debut in this collection include new essays by and interviews with Fred Ho, Jose Lopez, Joel Kovel, Francesca Fiorentini and Clare Bayard, David McReynolds, Greg Payton, Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, Ellen Barfield, Jon Cohen, Suzanne Ross, Sachio Ko-Yin, Edward Hasbrouck, Dean Johnson, and Dan Berger. Other contributions include work by Andrea Dworkin, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Starhawk, Andrea Smith, John Stoltenberg, Vincent Harding, Liz McAlister, Victor Lewis, Matthew Lyons, Tim Wise, Dorothy Cotton, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Kenyon Farrow, Frida Berrigan, David Gilbert, Chris Crass, and many others. Peppered throughout the anthology are original and new poems by Chrystos, Dylcia Pagan, Malkia M'Buzi Moore, Sarah Husein, Mary Jane Sullivan, Liz Roberts, and the late Marilyn Buck.


DON'T LEAVE YOUR FRIENDS BEHIND
Concrete Ways to Support Families in Social Justice Movements and Communities
Victoria Law and China Martens

Don't Leave Your Friends Behind

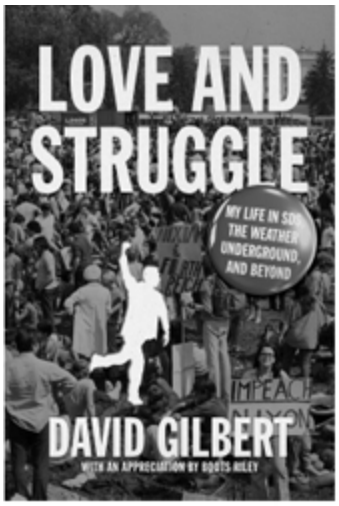
Concrete Ways to Support Families in Social Justice Movements and Communities

Edited by Victoria Law and China Martens
256 pages

Don't Leave Your Friends Behind is a collection of concrete tips, suggestions, and narratives on ways that non-parents can support parents, children, and caregivers in their communities, social movements, and collective processes. *Don't Leave Your Friends Behind* focuses on issues affecting children and caregivers within the larger framework of social justice, mutual aid, and collective liberation.

How do we create new, nonhierarchical structures of support and mutual aid, and include all ages in the struggle for social justice? There are many books on parenting, but few on being a good community member and a good ally to parents, caregivers, and children as we collectively build a strong all-ages culture of resistance. Any group of parents will tell you how hard their struggles are and how they are left out, but no book focuses on how allies can address issues of caretakers' and children's oppression. Many well-intentioned childless activists don't interact with young people on a regular basis and don't know how. *Don't Leave Your Friends Behind* provides them with the resources and support to get started.

Contributors include: The Bay Area Childcare Collective, Ramsey Beyer, Rozalinda Borcilă, Mariah Boone, Marianne Bullock, Lindsey Campbell, Briana Cavanaugh, CRAP! Collective, a de la maza pérez tamayo, Ingrid DeLeon, Clayton Dewey, David Gilbert, A.S. Givens, Jason Gonzales, Tiny (aka Lisa Gray-Garcia), Jessica Hoffman, Heather Jackson, Rahula Janowski, Sine Hwang Jensen, Agnes Johnson, Simon Knaphus, Victoria Law, London Pro-Feminist Men's Group, Amariah Love, Oluko Lumumba, mama raccoon, Mamas of Color Rising/Young Women United, China Martens, Noemi Martinez, Kathleen McIntyre, Stacey Milbern, Jessica Mills, Tomas Moniz, Coleen Murphy, Maegan "la Mamita Mala" Ortiz, Traci Picard, Amanda Rich, Fabiola Sandoval, Cynthia Ann Schemmer, Mikaela Shafer, Mustafa Shakur, Kate Shapiro, Jennifer Silverman, Harriet Moon Smith, Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie, Darran White Tilghman, Jessica Trimbath, Max Ventura, and Mari Villaluna.



Love and Struggle

My Life in SDS, the Weather Underground, and Beyond

David Gilbert
Foreword by Boots Riley
352 pages

A nice Jewish boy from suburban Boston—hell, an Eagle Scout!—David Gilbert arrived at Columbia University just in time for the explosive Sixties. From the early anti-Vietnam War protests to the founding of SDS, from the Columbia Strike to the tragedy of the Townhouse, Gilbert was on the scene: as organizer, theoretician, and above all, activist. He was among the first militants who went underground to build the clandestine resistance to war and racism known as "Weatherman." And he was among the last to emerge, in captivity, after the disaster of the 1981 Brink's robbery, an attempted expropriation that resulted in four deaths and long prison terms. In this extraordinary memoir, written from the maximum-security prison where he has lived for almost thirty years, Gilbert tells the intensely personal story of his own Long March from liberal to radical to revolutionary.

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